THE WATER BABIES

Margaret Lockwood

Upon the snow-white pillow lay the most beautiful little girl.

THE WATER-BABIES

Abridged from the Original Tale

By
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THOMAS NELSON AND SONS
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Come read me my riddle, each good little man;
If you cannot read it, no grown-up folk can.

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THE WATER-BABIES.

CHAPTER I.

ONCE upon a time there was a little chimney-sweep, and his name was Tom.

He lived in a great town in the north country, where there were plenty of chimneys to sweep, and plenty of money for Tom to earn and his master to spend. He could not read or write, and did not care to do either; and he never washed himself, for there was no water up the court where he lived.

He had never been taught to say his prayers. He never had heard of God or of Christ.

He cried half his time, and laughed the other half. He cried when he had to climb the dark flues, rubbing his poor knees and elbows raw, and when the soot got into his

eyes, and when his master beat him, and when he had not enough to eat. And he laughed the other half of the day, when he was tossing halfpennies with the other boys, or playing leap-frog over the posts, or bowling stones at the horses' legs as they trotted by.

As for chimney-sweeping, and being hungry, and being beaten, he took all that for the way of the world, like the rain and snow and thunder.

One day a smart little groom rode into the court where Tom lived. Tom was just hiding behind a wall, to heave half a brick at his horse's legs; but the groom saw him, and halloed to him to know where Mr. Grimes, the chimney-sweep, lived. Now Mr. Grimes was Tom's own master; and Tom was always civil to customers, so he put the half-brick down quietly behind the wall, and proceeded to take orders.

Mr. Grimes was to come up next morning to Sir John Harthover's, at the Place, for the chimneys wanted sweeping. And so the little groom rode away.

Tom's master was so delighted at his new

customer that he knocked Tom down out of hand, and drank more beer that night than he usually did in two, in order to be sure of getting up in time next morning; for the more a man's head aches when he wakes, the more glad he is to turn out and have a breath of fresh air. And when he did get up at four the next morning, he knocked Tom down again, in order to teach him that he must be an extra good boy that day, as they were going to a very great house, and might make a very good thing of it, if they could but give satisfaction.

Well, he and his master set out. Grimes rode the donkey in front, and Tom and the brushes walked behind; out of the court, and up the street, past the closed window-shutters, and the winking, weary policemen, and the roofs all shining gray in the gray dawn.

They passed through the pitmen's village, all shut up and silent now, and through the turnpike; and then they were out in the real country, and plodding along the black dusty road,

between black slag walls, with no sound but the groaning and thumping of the pit-engine in the next field. But soon the road grew white, and the walls likewise; and at the wall's foot grew long grass and gay flowers, all drenched with dew; and instead of the groaning of the pit-engine, they heard the skylark saying his matins high up in the air, and the pit-bird warbling in the sedges, as he had warbled all night long.

On they went; and Tom looked, and looked, for he never had been so far into the country before; and longed to get over a gate, and pick buttercups, and look for birds' nests in the hedge. But Mr. Grimes was a man of business, and would not have heard of that.

Soon they came up with a poor Irish-woman, trudging along with a bundle at her back. She had a gray shawl over her head, and a crimson petticoat. She had neither shoes nor stockings, and limped along as if she were tired and footsore; but she was a very tall, handsome woman, with bright gray eyes, and heavy black hair hanging about

her cheeks. And she took Mr. Grimes's fancy so much that when he came alongside he called out to her,—

"This is a hard road for a gradely foot like that. Will ye up, lass, and ride behind me?"

But perhaps she did not admire Mr. Grimes's look and voice, for she answered quietly,—

"No, thank you; I'd sooner walk with your little lad here."

"You may please yourself," growled Grimes, and went on smoking.

So she walked beside Tom and talked to him, and asked him where he lived and what he knew, and all about himself, till Tom thought he had never met such a pleasant-spoken woman. And she asked him, at last, whether he said his prayers; and seemed sad when he told her that he knew no prayers to say.

Then he asked her where *she* lived, and she said far away by the sea. And Tom asked her about the sea; and she told him how it rolled and roared over the rocks in winter nights, and lay still in the bright

summer days for the children to bathe and play in it; and many a story more, till Tom longed to go and see the sea, and bathe in it likewise.

At last, at the bottom of a hill, they came to a spring—a real north-country limestone fountain. Out of a low cave of rock at the foot of a limestone crag the great fountain rose, quelling, and bubbling, and gurgling, so clear that you could not tell where the water ended and the air began; and ran away under the road, a stream large enough to turn a mill.

And there Grimes stopped and looked; and Tom looked too. Tom was wondering whether anything lived in that dark cave, and came out at night to fly in the meadows. But Grimes was not wondering at all. Without a word he got off his donkey and clambered over the low road wall, and knelt down and began dipping his ugly head into the spring—and very dirty he made it.

Tom was picking the flowers as fast as he could. The Irishwoman helped him, and showed him how to tie them up; and a very

pretty nosegay they had made between them. But when he saw Grimes actually wash he stopped, quite astonished; and when Grimes had finished, and began shaking his ears to dry them, he said,—

"Why, master, I never saw you do that before."

"Nor will again, most likely. 'Twasn't for cleanliness I did it, but for coolness. I'd be ashamed to want washing every week or so, like any smutty collier lad."

"I wish I might go and dip my head in," said poor little Tom.

"Thou come along," said Grimes; "what dost want with washing thyself?"

"I don't care for you," said naughty Tom, and ran down to the stream and began washing his face.

Grimes was very sulky because the woman preferred Tom's company to his; so he dashed at him with horrid words, and tore him up from his knees, and began beating him. But Tom was accustomed to that, and got his head safe between Mr. Grimes's legs, and kicked his shins with all his might.

"Are you not ashamed of yourself, Thomas Grimes?" cried the Irishwoman over the wall.

Grimes looked up, startled at her knowing his name; but all he answered was, "No, nor never was yet," and went on beating Tom.

"True for you. If you ever had been ashamed of yourself, you would have gone over into Vendale long ago."

"What do you know about Vendale?" shouted Grimes; but he left off beating Tom.

"I know about Vendale, and about you too. I know, for instance, what happened in Aldermire Copse, by night, two years ago come Martinmas."

"You do?" shouted Grimes; and leaving Tom, he climbed up over the wall and faced the woman. Tom thought he was going to strike her; but she looked him too full and fierce in the face for that.

"Yes, I was there," said the Irishwoman quietly; "and if you strike that boy again, I will tell what I know."

Grimes seemed quite cowed, and got on his donkey without another word.

"Stop!" said the Irishwoman. "I have one more word for you both; for you will both see me again before all is over. Those that wish to be clean, clean they will be; and those that wish to be foul, foul they will be. Remember."

And she turned away, and through a gate into the meadow. Grimes stood still a moment, like a man who had been stunned. Then he rushed after her, shouting, "You come back." But when he got into the meadow the woman was not there.

Had she hidden away? There was no place to hide in. But Grimes looked about, and Tom also, for he was as puzzled as Grimes himself at her disappearing so suddenly; but look where they would, she was not there.

Grimes came back again, as silent as a post, for he was a little frightened; and getting on his donkey, filled a fresh pipe, and smoked away, leaving Tom in peace.

And now they had gone three miles and more, and had come to Sir John's lodge gates.

Very grand lodges they were, with very grand iron gates and stone gate-posts, and on the top of each a most dreadful stone bogy, all teeth, horns, and tail. Grimes rang at the gate, and out came a keeper, and opened it.

"I was told to expect thee," he said. "Now thou'lt be so good as to keep to the main avenue, and not let me find a hare or a rabbit on thee when thou comest back. I shall look sharp for one, I tell thee."

"Not if it's in the bottom of the soot-bag," quoth Grimes, and at that he laughed; and the keeper laughed and said,—

"If that's thy sort, I may as well walk up with thee to the hall."

"I think thou best had. It's thy business to see after thy game, man, and not mine."

So the keeper went with them, and, to Tom's surprise, he and Grimes chatted together all the way quite pleasantly.

They walked up a great avenue of limes, a full mile long, and between their stems Tom peeped trembling at the horns of the sleeping deer, which stood up among the ferns. Tom had never seen such enormous trees, and as

he looked up he fancied that the blue sky rested on their heads. But he was puzzled very much by a strange murmuring noise which followed them all the way—so much puzzled that at last he took courage to ask the keeper what it was.

He spoke very civilly, and called him Sir, for he was horribly afraid of him; which pleased the keeper, and he told him that they were the bees about the lime flowers.

"What are bees?" asked Tom.

"What make honey."

"What is honey?" asked Tom.

"Thou hold thy noise," said Grimes.

"Let the boy be," said the keeper. "He's a civil young chap now, and that's more than he'll be long if he bides with thee."

Grimes laughed, for he took that for a compliment.

"I wish I were a keeper," said Tom, "to live in such a beautiful place, and wear green velveteens, and have a real dog-whistle at my button, like you."

The keeper laughed; he was a kind-hearted fellow enough.

And by this time they were come up to the great iron gates in front of the house; and Tom stared through them at the rhododendrons and azaleas, which were all in flower; and then at the house itself, and wondered how many chimneys there were in it, and how long ago it was built, and what was the man's name that built it, and whether he got much money for his job.

But Tom and his master did not go in through the great iron gates, but round the back way, and a very long way round it was; and into a little back-door, where the ash-boy let them in, yawning horribly; and then in a passage the housekeeper met them, in such a flowered chintz dressing-gown that Tom mistook her for My Lady herself, and she gave Grimes solemn orders about "You will take care of this, and take care of that," as if he was going up the chimneys, and not Tom. And Grimes listened, and said every now and then, under his voice, "You'll mind that, you little beggar?" And Tom did mind, all, at least, that he could. And then the housekeeper turned them into a grand room,

all covered up in sheets of brown paper, and bade them begin ; and so after a whimper or two, and a kick from his master, into the grate Tom went, and up the chimney, while a housemaid stayed in the room to watch the furniture.

How many chimneys Tom swept I cannot say ; but he swept so many that he got quite tired, and puzzled too, for they were not like the town flues to which he was accustomed, but such as you would find in old country houses, large and crooked chimneys, which had been altered again and again, till they ran one into another considerably. So Tom fairly lost his way in them ; not that he cared much for that, for he was as much at home in a chimney as a mole is underground ; but at last, coming down the right chimney as he thought, he came down the wrong one, and found himself standing on the hearth-rug, in a room the like of which he had never seen before.

The room was all dressed in white—white window-curtains, white bed-curtains, white furniture, and white walls, with just a few

lines of pink here and there. The carpet was all over gay little flowers, and the walls were hung with pictures in gilt frames.

The next thing Tom saw, and that puzzled him, was a wash-stand, with ewers and basins, and soap and brushes, and towels, and a large bath full of clean water; what a heap of things all for washing! "She must be a very dirty lady, by my master's rule," thought Tom, "to want as much scrubbing as all that."

And then, looking toward the bed, he saw that dirty lady, and held his breath with astonishment.

Under the snow-white coverlet, upon the snow-white pillow, lay the most beautiful little girl that Tom had ever seen. Her cheeks were almost as white as the pillow, and her hair was like threads of gold spread all about over the bed. She might have been as old as Tom, or maybe a year or two older; but Tom did not think of that. He thought only of her delicate skin and golden hair, and wondered whether she was a real live person, or one of the wax dolls he had seen in the shops. But

when he saw her breathe, he made up his mind that she was alive, and stood staring at her, as if she had been an angel out of heaven.

No. She cannot be dirty; she never could have been dirty, thought Tom to himself. And then he thought, "And are all people like that when they are washed?" And he looked at his own wrist, and tried to rub the soot off, and wondered whether it ever would come off. "Certainly I should look much prettier then, if I grew at all like her."

And looking round, he suddenly saw, standing close to him, a little black, ragged figure, with bleared eyes and grinning white teeth. He turned on it angrily. What did such a little black ape want in that sweet young lady's room? And, behold, it was himself, reflected in a great mirror, the like of which poor Tom had never seen before.

And Tom, for the first time in his life, found out that he was dirty. He burst into tears with shame and anger, and turned to sneak up the chimney again and hide, and

upset the fender and threw the fire-irons down, with a noise as of ten thousand tin kettles tied to ten thousand dogs' tails.

Up jumped the little white lady in her bed, and, seeing Tom, screamed as shrill as any peacock. In rushed a stout old nurse from the next room, and seeing Tom likewise, made up her mind that he had come to rob, plunder, destroy, and burn; and dashed at him, as he lay over the fender, so fast that she caught him by the jacket.

But she did not hold him; for he doubled under the good lady's arm, across the room, and out of the window in a moment.

He did not need to drop out, though he would have done so bravely enough. But all under the window spread a tree, with great leaves and sweet white flowers almost as big as his head. Down the tree he went, like a cat, and across the garden lawn, and over the iron railings, and up the park towards the wood, leaving the old nurse to scream murder and fire at the window.

The under-gardener, mowing, threw down his scythe, and gave chase to poor Tom.

The dairy-maid making butter heard the noise, got the churn between her knees, and tumbled over it; and yet she jumped up, and gave chase to Tom.

A groom cleaning Sir John's hack at the stables let him go loose, and gave chase to Tom. Grimes upset the soot-sack in the new-gravelled yard, and spoilt it all utterly; but he ran out, and gave chase to Tom.

The old steward riding out opened the park gate in such a hurry that he hung up his pony's chin upon the spikes, and, for aught I know, it hangs there still; but he jumped off, and gave chase to Tom. The ploughman left his horses at the headland, and one jumped over the fence, and pulled the other into the ditch, plough and all; but he ran on, and gave chase to Tom.

The keeper, who was taking a stoat out of a trap, let the stoat go, and ran after Tom.

Sir John looked out of his study window

and up at the nurse, and a marten dropped mud in his eye, and yet he ran out, and gave chase to Tom.

The Irishwoman, too, was walking up to the house to beg—she must have got round by some byway—but she threw away her bundle, and gave chase to Tom likewise.

In a word, never was there heard at Hall Place such a noise, row, hubbub, babel, shindy, and hullabaloo as that day, when Grimes, the gardener, the groom, the dairy-maid, Sir John, the steward, the ploughman, the keeper, and the Irishwoman all ran up the park, shouting "Stop thief," in the belief that Tom had at least a thousand pounds' worth of jewels in his empty pockets.

And all the while poor Tom paddled up the park with his little bare feet, like a small black gorilla fleeing to the forest. Alas for him! there was no big father gorilla therein to take his part.

Tom, of course, made for the woods. He had never been in a wood in his life; but he was sharp enough to know that he might hide in a bush or swarm up a tree, and, alto-

gether, had more chance there than in the open.

But when he got into the wood, he found it a very different sort of place from what he had fancied. He pushed into a thick cover of rhododendrons, and found himself at once caught in a trap. The boughs laid hold of his legs and arms, poked him in his face and his stomach, made him shut his eyes tight; and when he got through the rhododendrons, the hassock-grass and sedges tumbled him over, and cut his poor little fingers afterwards most spitefully.

"I must get out of this," thought Tom, "or I shall stay here till somebody comes to help me—which is just what I don't want."

But how to get out was the difficult matter. And, indeed, I don't think he would ever have got out at all, but have stayed there till the cock-robins covered him with leaves, if he had not suddenly run his head against a wall.

And of course Tom hurt his head; but he was a brave boy, and did not mind that a penny. He guessed that over the wall the

cover would end ; so up it he went, and over like a squirrel.

And there he was, out on the great grouse moors, which the country folk called Harthover Fell—heather and bog and rock, stretching away and up, up to the very sky.

Now, Tom was a cunning little fellow; so the first thing he did when he was over the wall was to make the neatest double sharp to his right, and run along under the wall for nearly half a mile.

Whereby Sir John, and the keeper, and the steward, and the gardener, and the ploughman, and the dairy-maid, and all the hue-and-cry together, went on ahead half a mile in the very opposite direction, and inside the wall, leaving him a mile off on the outside ; while Tom heard their shouts die away in the woods, and chuckled to himself merrily.

At last he came to a dip in the land, and went to the bottom of it, and then he turned bravely away from the wall and up the moor ; for he knew that he had put a hill between himself and his enemies, and could go on without their seeing him.

But the Irishwoman, alone of them all, had seen which way Tom went. She had kept ahead of every one the whole time ; and yet she neither walked nor ran. She went along quite smoothly and gracefully, while her feet twinkled past each other so fast that you could not see which was foremost, till every one asked the other who the strange woman was.

But when she came to the plantation they lost sight of her ; and they could do no less. For she went quietly over the wall after Tom, and followed him wherever he went. Sir John and the rest saw no more of her, and out of sight was out of mind.

And now Tom was right away into the heather. The moor grew more and more broken and hilly, yet not so rough but that little Tom could jog along well enough, and find time, too, to stare about at the strange place, which was like a new world to him.

He saw great spiders there, who sat in the middle of their webs, and when they saw Tom coming, shook them so fast that they became invisible. Then he saw lizards,

brown and gray and green, and thought they were snakes and would sting him ; but they were as much frightened as he, and shot away into the heath.

So Tom went on and on, he hardly knew why ; yet he liked the great wide, strange place, and the cool, fresh, bracing air. But he went more and more slowly as he got higher up the hill ; for now the ground grew very bad indeed. Instead of soft turf and springy heather, he met great patches of flat limestone rock, just like ill-made pavements, with deep cracks between the stones and ledges, filled with ferns ; so he had to hop from stone to stone, and now and then he slipped in between, and hurt his little bare toes, though they were tolerably tough ones ; but still he would go on and up, he could not tell why.

What would Tom have said if he had seen, walking over the moor behind him, the very same Irishwoman who had taken his part upon the road ? But he never saw her, though she saw him.

And now he began to get a little hungry

and very thirsty; for he had run a long way, and the sun had risen high in heaven, and the rock was as hot as an oven. But he could see nothing to eat anywhere, and still less to drink.

The heath was full of bilberries and whinberries; but they were only in flower yet, for it was but June. As for water, who can find that on the top of a limestone rock? Now and then he passed by a deep, dark swallow-hole, going down into the earth, as if it was the chimney of some dwarf's house underground; and more than once, as he passed, he could hear water falling, trickling, tinkling many, many feet below. How he longed to get down to it and cool his poor baked lips! But, brave little chimney-sweep as he was, he dared not climb down such chimneys as those.

So he went on and on, till his head spun round with the heat, and he thought he heard church-bells ringing a long way off.

"Ah!" he thought, "where there is a

church there will be houses and people, and perhaps some one will give me a bit and a sup." So he set off again to look for the church, for he was sure that he heard the bells quite plain.

And in a minute more, when he looked round, he stopped again, and said, "Why, what a big place the world is!"

And so it was, for from the top of the mountain he could see — what could he not see?

Behind him, far below, were Harthover, and the dark woods, and the shining salmon river; and on his left, far below, were the town, and the smoking chimneys of the collieries; and far, far away the river widened to the shining sea, and little white specks, which were ships, lay on its bosom. Before him lay, spread out like a map, great plains, and farms, and villages, amid dark knots of trees. They all seemed at his very feet; but he had sense to see that they were long miles away.

And to his right rose moor after moor, hill after hill, till they faded away, blue into

blue sky. But between him and those moors, and really at his very feet, lay something, to which, as soon as Tom saw it, he determined to go, for that was the place for him.

A deep, deep green and rocky valley, very narrow, and filled with wood ; but through the wood, hundreds of feet below him, he could see a clear stream glance. Oh, if he could but get down to that stream ! Then by the stream he saw the roof of a little cottage, and a little garden set out in squares and beds. And there was a tiny little red thing moving in the garden, no bigger than a fly.

As Tom looked down, he saw that it was a woman in a red petticoat. Ah ! perhaps she would give him something to eat. And there were the church-bells ringing again. Surely there must be a village down there. Well, nobody would know him, or what had happened at the Place. The news could not have got there yet, even if Sir John had set all the policemen in the county after him ; and he could get down there in five minutes.

Tom was quite right about the hue-and-cry not having got thither, for he had come without knowing it the best part of ten miles from Harthover; but he was wrong about getting down in five minutes, for the cottage was a good thousand feet below.

However, down he went, though he was very footsore; while the church-bells rang so loud he began to think that they must be inside his own head; and the river chimed and tinkled far below, and this was the song which it sang:—

"Clear and cool, clear and cool,
By laughing shallow and dreaming pool;
Cool and clear, cool and clear,
By shining shingle and foaming wear;
Under the crag where the ouzel sings,
And the ivied wall where the church-bell rings,
Undefiled, for the undefiled—
Play by me, bathe in me, mother and child."

So Tom went down; and all the while he never saw the Irishwoman going down behind him.

CHAPTER II.

A MILE off and a thousand feet down.

So Tom found it; though it seemed as if he could have chucked a pebble on to the back of the woman in the red petticoat who was weeding in the garden, or even across the dale to the rocks beyond. For the bottom of the valley was just one field broad, and on the other side ran the stream; and above it, gray crag, gray down, gray stair, gray moor walled up to heaven.

A quiet, silent, rich, happy place; a narrow crack cut deep into the earth—so deep and so out of the way that the bad bogies can hardly find it out. The name of the place is Vendale.

So Tom went to go down; and first he

went down three hundred feet of steep heather, mixed up with loose brown grit-stone, as rough as a file; which was not pleasant to his poor little heels, as he came bump, stump, jump down the steep. And still he thought he could throw a stone into the garden.

Then he went down three hundred feet of limestone terraces, one below the other, as straight as if a carpenter had ruled them with his ruler and then cut them out with his chisel. There was no heath there, but—

First, a little grass slope, covered with the prettiest flowers, rockrose and saxifrage, and thyme and basil, and all sorts of sweet herbs.

Then bump down a two-foot step of limestone.

Then another bit of grass and flowers.

Then bump down a one-foot step.

Then another bit of grass and flowers for fifty yards, as steep as the house-roof, where he had to slide down on his back.

Then another step of stone, ten feet high; and there he had to stop himself, and crawl along the edge to find a crack.

Then, when he had found a dark, narrow crack, full of green-stalked fern such as hangs in the basket in the drawing-room, and had crawled down through it with knees and elbows, as he would down a chimney, there was another grass slope, and another step, and so on, till—oh, dear me! I wish it was all over; and so did he. And yet he thought he could throw a stone into the old woman's garden.

At last he came to a bank of beautiful shrubs, through which he could see the stream sparkling, and hear it murmur on the white pebbles. He did not know that it was three hundred feet below.

You would have been giddy, perhaps, at looking down, but Tom was not. He was a brave little chimney-sweep; and when he found himself on the top of a high cliff, instead of sitting down and crying, he said, "Ah, this will just suit me!" though he was very tired; and down he went, by stock and stone, sedge and ledge, bush and rush, as if he had been born a jolly little black ape, with four hands instead of two.

And all the while he never saw the Irishwoman coming down behind him.

But he was getting terribly tired now. The burning sun on the fells had sucked him up; but the damp heat of the woody crag sucked him up still more; and the perspiration ran out of the ends of his fingers and toes, and washed him cleaner than he had been for a whole year. But, of course, he dirtied everything terribly as he went. There has been a great black smudge all down the crag ever since. And there have been more black beetles in Vendale since than ever were known before—all, of course, owing to Tom's having blacked the original papa of them all just as he was setting off to be married, with a sky-blue coat and scarlet leggings.

At last he got to the bottom. But, behold, it was not the bottom—as people usually find when they are coming down a mountain. For at the foot of the crag were heaps and heaps of fallen limestone of every size from that of your head to that of a stage-wagon, with holes between them full

of sweet heath-fern; and before Tom got through them he was out in the bright sunshine again; and then he felt, once for all and suddenly, as people generally do, that he was b-e-a-t, beat.

He could not get on. The sun was burning, and yet he felt chill all over. He was quite empty, and yet he felt quite sick. There was but two hundred yards of smooth pasture between him and the cottage, and yet he could not walk down it. He could hear the stream murmuring only one field beyond it, and yet it seemed to him as if it was a hundred miles off.

He lay down on the grass till the beetles ran over him and the flies settled on his nose. I don't know when he would have got up again if the gnats and the midges had not taken compassion on him. But the gnats blew their trumpets so loud in his ear, and the midges nibbled so at his hands and face wherever they could find a place free from soot, that at last he woke up, and stumbled away, down over a low wall, and into a road, and up to the cottage door,

which was all hung round with clematis and roses; and then peeped in, half afraid.

And there sat by the empty fireplace the nicest old woman that ever was seen, in her red petticoat, and short dimity bed-gown, and clean white cap, with a black silk handkerchief over it, tied under her chin. At her feet sat the grandfather of all the cats; and opposite her sat, on two benches, twelve or fourteen neat, rosy, chubby little children, learning their Chris-cross-row.

All the children started at Tom's dirty black figure. The girls began to cry, and the boys began to laugh, and all pointed at him rudely enough; but Tom was too tired to care for that.

"What art thou, and what dost want?" cried the old dame. "A chimney-sweep! Away with thee! I'll have no sweeps here."

"Water," said poor little Tom, quite faint.

"Water? there's plenty i' the beck," she said quite sharply.

"But I can't get there; I'm 'most clemmed with hunger and drought." And Tom sank

down upon the doorstep, and laid his head against the post.

And the old dame looked at him through her spectacles one minute, and two, and three; and then she said, "He's sick, and a bairn's a bairn, sweep or none."

"Water," said Tom.

"God forgive me!" and she put by her spectacles and rose and came to Tom. "Water's bad for thee; I'll give thee milk." And she toddled off into the next room, and brought a cup of milk and a bit of bread.

Tom drank the milk off at one draught, and then looked up, revived.

"Where didst come from?" said the dame.

"Over Fell there," said Tom, and pointed up into the sky.

"Over Harthover and down Lewthwaite Crag? Art sure thou art not lying?"

"Why should I?" said Tom, and leant his head against the post.

"And how got ye up there?"

"I came over from the Place," and Tom told all the truth in a few words.

"Bless thy little heart! And thou hast not been stealing, then?"

"No."

"Bless thy little heart! and I'll warrant not. Why, God's guided the bairn, because he was innocent! Why dost not eat thy bread?"

"I can't."

"It's good enough, for I made it myself."

"I can't," said Tom, and he laid his head on his knees, and then asked,—

"Is it Sunday?"

"No, then; why should it be?"

"Because I hear the church-bells ringing so."

"Bless thy pretty heart! The bairn's sick. Come wi' me, and I'll hap thee up somewhere. If thou wert a bit cleaner, I'd put thee in my own bed for the Lord's sake. But come along here."

But when Tom tried to get up, he was so tired and giddy that she had to help him and lead him.

She put him in an outhouse upon soft sweet hay and an old rug, and bade him sleep off his walk, and she would come to him when school was over, in an hour's time.

And so she went in again, expecting Tom to fall fast asleep at once.

But Tom did not fall asleep.

Instead of it, he turned and tossed and kicked about in the strangest way, and felt so hot all over that he longed to get into the river and cool himself. Then he fell half asleep, and dreamt that he heard the little white lady crying to him, "Oh, you're so dirty! go and be washed;" and then that he heard the Irishwoman saying, "Those that wish to be clean, clean they will be."

And then he heard the church-bells ring so loud, close to him too, that he was sure it must be Sunday, in spite of what the old dame had said; and he would go to church, and see what a church was like inside. But the people would never let him come in, all over soot and dirt like that. He must go to the river and wash first. And he said out loud again and again, though being half asleep

he did not know it, "I must be clean! I must be clean!"

And all of a sudden he found himself in the middle of a meadow, over the road, with the stream just before him, saying continually, "I must be clean! I must be clean!" He had got there on his own legs, between sleep and awake. But he was not a bit surprised, and went on to the bank of the brook, and lay down on the grass, and looked into the clear, clear limestone water, with every pebble at the bottom bright and clean, while the little silver trout dashed about in fright at the sight of his black face. And he dipped his hand in, and found it so cool, cool, cool; and he said, "I will be a fish; I will swim in the water. I must be clean! I must be clean!"

So he pulled off all his clothes in such haste that he tore some of them—which was easy enough with such ragged old things. And he put his poor hot, sore feet into the water, and then his legs; and the farther he went in, the more the church-bells rang in his head.

"Ah," said Tom, "I must be quick and

wash myself! the bells are ringing quite loud now; and they will stop soon, and then the door will be shut, and I shall never be able to get in at all."

And all the while he never saw the Irish-woman, not behind him this time, but before. For just before he came to the river-side she had stepped down into the cool, clear water; and her shawl and her petticoat floated off her, and the green water-weeds floated round her sides, and the white water-lilies floated round her head, and the fairies of the stream came up from the bottom and bore her away and down upon their arms; for she was the Queen of them all, and perhaps of more besides.

"Where have you been?" they asked her.

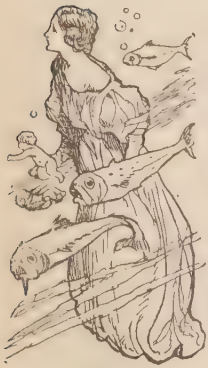
"I have been smoothing sick folk's pillows, and whispering sweet dreams into their ears; opening cottage casements, to let out the stifling air; coaxing little children away from gutters and foul pools where fever breeds; doing all I can to help those who will not help themselves—and little enough that is, and weary work for me. But I have

brought you a new little brother, and watched him safe all the way here."

Then all the fairies laughed for joy at the thought that they had a little brother coming.

"But mind, maidens, he must not see you or know that you are here. He is but a savage now, and like the beasts which perish; and from the beasts he must learn. So you must not play with him, or speak to him, or let him see you; but only keep him from being harmed."

Then the fairies were sad because they could not play with their new brother, but they always did what they were told.



And their Queen floated away down the river, and whither she went, thither they came. But all this Tom, of course, never saw or heard; and perhaps if he had it would have made little difference in the story, for he was so hot and thirsty, and longed so to be clean for once, that he tumbled himself as quick as he could into the clear, cool stream.

And he had not been in it two minutes before he fell fast asleep, into the quietest, sunniest, cosiest sleep that ever he had in his life ; and he dreamt about the green meadows by which he had walked that morning, and the tall elm trees, and the sleeping cows ; and after that he dreamt of nothing at all.

The reason of his falling into such a delightful sleep is very simple, and yet hardly any one has found it out. It was merely that the fairies took him.

The kind old dame came back at twelve, when school was over, to look at Tom ; but there was no Tom there. She looked about for his footprints ; but the ground was so hard that there was no footprint. So she went in again quite sulky, thinking that little Tom had tricked her with a false story, and shammed ill, and then run away again.

But she altered her mind the next day. For when Sir John and the rest of them had run themselves out of breath and lost Tom, they went back again, looking very foolish.

And they looked more foolish still when Sir John heard more of the story from the

nurse; and more foolish still, again, when they heard the whole story from Miss Ellie, the little lady in white. All she had seen was a poor little black chimney-sweep, crying and sobbing, and going to get up the chimney again. Of course she was very much frightened, and no wonder. But that was all. The boy had taken nothing in the room; by the mark of his little sooty feet they could see that he had never been off the hearthrug till the nurse caught hold of him. It was all a mistake.

So Sir John told Grimes to go home, and promised him five shillings if he would bring the boy quietly up to him, without beating him, that he might be sure of the truth. For he took it for granted, and Grimes too, that Tom had made his way home.

But no Tom came back to Mr. Grimes that evening; and he went to the police office, to tell them to look out for the boy. But no Tom was heard of. As for his having gone over those great fells to Vendale, they no more dreamed of that than of his having gone to the moon.

So Mr. Grimes came up to Harthover next day with a very sour face; but when he got there, Sir John was over the hills and far away. For good Sir John had slept very badly that night; and he said to his lady, "My dear, the boy must have got over into the grouse-moors and lost himself; and he lies very heavily on my conscience, poor little lad. But I know what I will do."

So at five the next morning up he got, and into his bath, and into his shooting-jacket and gaiters, and into the stableyard; and bade them bring his shooting-pony, and the keeper to come on his pony, and the huntsman, and the first whip, and the second whip, and the underkeeper with the bloodhound in a leash. They took him up to the place where Tom had gone into the wood; and there the hound lifted up his mighty voice, and told them all he knew.

Then he took them to the place where Tom had climbed the wall; and they shoved it down, and all got through.

And then the wise dog took them over the

moor and over the fells, step by step, very slowly; for the scent was a day old, you know, and very light from the heat and drought. But that was why cunning old Sir John started at five in the morning.

And at last the hound came to the top of Lewthwaite Crag, and there he bayed, and looked up in their faces as much as to say, "I tell you he is gone down here!"

They could hardly believe that Tom would have gone so far; and when they looked at that awful cliff, they could never believe that he would have dared to face it. But if the dog said so it must be true.

"Heaven forgive us!" said Sir John. "If we find him at all, we shall find him lying at the bottom." And he slapped his great hand upon his great thigh, and said,—

"Who will go down over Lewthwaite Crag and see if that boy is alive? Oh that I were twenty years younger, and I would go down myself!" And so he would have done, as well as any sweep in the county. Then he said,—

"Twenty pounds to the man who brings

Then he came to a pool full of little trout.

me that boy alive!" and as was his way, what he said he meant.

Now among the lot was a little groom-boy, a very little groom indeed; and he was the same who had ridden up the court and told Tom to come to the Hall; and he said,—

"Twenty pounds or none, I will go down over Lewthwaite Crag, if it's only for the poor boy's sake. For he was as civil spoken a little chap as ever climbed a flue."

So down over Lewthwaite Crag he went. A very smart groom he was at the top, and a very shabby one at the bottom; for he tore his gaiters, and he tore his breeches, and he tore his jacket, and he burst his braces, and he burst his boots, and he lost his hat, and what was worst of all, he lost his shirt pin, which he prized very much, for it was gold; but he never saw anything of Tom.

And all the while Sir John and the rest were riding round, full three miles to the right and back again, to get into Vendale and to the foot of the crag.

When they came to the old dame's school, all the children came out to see. And the old dame came out too; and when she saw Sir John, she curtsied very low, for she was a tenant of his.

"Well, dame, and how are you?" said Sir John.

"Blessings on you as broad as your back, Harthover," says she—she didn't call him Sir John, but only Harthover, for that is the fashion in the north country—"blessings on your heart, and what makes you look so sad the morn?"

"I'm looking for a lost child, a chimney-sweep, that is run away."

"O Harthover," says she, "ye were always a just man and a merciful; and ye'll no harm the poor little lad if I give you tidings of him?"

"Not I, not I, dame. I'm afraid we hunted him out of the house all on a miserable mistake, and the hound has brought him to the top of Lewthwaite Crag, and—"

Whereat the old dame broke out crying, without letting him finish his story,—

"So he told me the truth after all, poor little dear!" And then she told Sir John all.

"Bring the dog here and lay him on," said Sir John.

And the dog opened at once, and went away at the back of the cottage, over the road, and over the meadow, and through a bit of alder copse; and there, upon an alder stump, they saw Tom's clothes lying. And then they knew as much about it all as there was any need to know.

And Tom?

Ah, now comes the most wonderful part of this wonderful story. Tom, when he woke—for of course he woke—found himself swimming about in the stream, being about four inches long, and having round his neck a set of gills, just like those of a sucking eft, which he mistook for a lace frill, till he pulled at them, found he hurt himself, and made up his mind that they were part of himself and best left alone.

In fact, the fairies had turned him into a water-baby.

Tom was quite alive, and cleaner and

merrier than he ever had been. The fairies had washed him, you see, in the swift river so thoroughly that not only his dirt but his whole husk and shell had been washed quite off him, and the pretty little real Tom was washed out of the inside of it, and swam away.

CHAPTER III.

TOM was now quite amphibious, and what is better still, he was clean.

He did not remember having ever been dirty. Indeed, he did not remember any of his old troubles—being tired, or hungry, or beaten, or sent up dark chimneys. Since that sweet sleep he had forgotten all about his master, and Harthover Place, and the little white girl, and, in a word, all that had happened to him when he lived before; and what was best of all, he had forgotten all the bad words which he had learned from Grimes and the rude boys with whom he used to play.

But Tom was very happy in the water. He had been sadly overworked in the land-world, and so now, to make up for that, he had nothing but holidays in the water-world for a long, long time to come.

And what did he live on? Water-cresses, perhaps, or perhaps water-gruel and water-milk. But we do not know what one-tenth of the water-things eat, so we are not answerable for the water-babies.

Sometimes he went along the smooth gravel water-ways, looking at the crickets which ran in and out among the stones as rabbits do on land; or he climbed over the ledges of rock, and saw the sand-pipes hanging in thousands, with every one of them a pretty little head and legs peeping out; or he went into a still corner and watched the caddises eating dead sticks as greedily as you would eat plum-pudding, and building their houses with silk and glue.

Then sometimes he came to a deep, still reach; and there he saw the water-forests. They would have looked to you only little weeds; but Tom, you must remember, was so little that everything looked a hundred times as big to him as it does to you.

Now you must know that all the things under the water talk, as horses, and dogs, and cows, and birds talk to each other; and

Tom soon learned to understand them and talk to them, so that he might have had very pleasant company if he had only been a good boy.

But I am sorry to say he was too like some other little boys, very fond of hunting and tormenting creatures for mere sport. He pecked the poor water-things about sadly, till they were all afraid of him, and got out of his way, or crept into their shells; so he had no one to speak to or play with.

The water-fairies, of course, were very sorry to see him so unhappy, and longed to take him and tell him how naughty he was; but they had been forbidden to do that. Tom had to learn his lesson for himself by sound and sharp experience, as many another foolish person has to do.

At last one day he found a caddis, and wanted it to peep out of its house; but its house door was shut. He had never seen a caddis with a house door before; so what must he do, the meddlesome little fellow,

but pull it open, to see what the poor lady was doing inside.

He broke the door to pieces, which was the prettiest little grating of silk, stuck all over with shining bits of crystal; and when he looked in the caddis poked out her head, and it had turned into just the shape of a bird's. But when Tom spoke to her she could not answer, for her mouth and face were tight tied up in a new night-cap of neat pink skin. However, if she didn't answer, all the other caddises did; for they held up their hands and shrieked,—

"Oh, you nasty, horrid boy; there you are at it again! And she had just laid herself up for a fortnight's sleep, and then she would have come out with such beautiful wings, and flown about, and laid such lots of eggs; and now you have broken her door, and she can't mend it, because her mouth is tied up for a fortnight, and she will die. Who sent you here to worry us out of our lives?"

So Tom swam away. He was very much ashamed of himself, and felt all the naughtier,

as little boys do when they have done wrong and won't say so.

Then he came to a pool full of little trout, and began tormenting them and trying to catch them; but they slipped through his fingers, and jumped clean out of the water in their fright. Then as Tom chased them he came close to a great dark hover under an alder root, and out floushed a huge old brown trout ten times as big as he was, and ran right against him, and I don't know which was the more frightened of the two.

Then he went on sulky and lonely, as he deserved to be; and under a bank he saw a very ugly, dirty creature sitting, about half as big as himself, which had six legs, and a big stomach, and a most ridiculous head with two great eyes and a face just like a donkey's.

"Oh," said Tom, "you are an ugly fellow, to be sure!" and he began making faces at him, and put his nose close to him, and halloed at him like a very rude boy.

When, hey presto! all the thing's donkey face came off in a moment, and out popped a long arm with a pair of pincers at the end

of it, and caught Tom by the nose. It did not hurt him much, but it held him quite tight.

"Yah, ah! Oh, let me go!" cried Tom.

"Then let *me* go," said the creature. "I want to be quiet. I want to split."

Tom promised to let him alone, and he let go. "Why do you want to split?" said Tom.

"Because my brothers and sisters have all split, and turned into beautiful creatures with wings; and I want to split too. Don't speak to me. I am sure I shall split. I will split!"

Tom stood still and watched him. And he swelled himself, and puffed, and stretched himself out stiff, and at last—crack, puff, bang—he opened all down his back, and then up to the top of his head.

And out of his inside came the most slender, elegant, soft creature, as soft and smooth as Tom, but very pale and weak, like a little child who has been ill a long time in a dark room. It moved its legs very feebly, and looked about it half ashamed; and then it began walking slowly up a grass stem to the top of the water.

Tom was so astonished that he never said a word; but he stared with all his eyes. And he went up to the top of the water, too, and peeped out to see what would happen.

And as the creature sat in the warm, bright sun a wonderful change came over it. It grew strong and firm; the most lovely colours began to show on its body, blue and yellow and black, spots and bars and rings; out of its back rose four great wings of bright brown gauze; and its eyes grew so large that they filled all its head, and shone like ten thousand diamonds.

"O you beautiful creature!" said Tom, and he put out his hand to catch it.

But the thing whirred up into the air, and hung poised on its wings a moment, and then settled down again by Tom quite fearless.

"No," it said, "you cannot catch me. I am a dragon-fly now, the king of all the flies; and I shall dance in the sunshine, and hawk over the river, and catch gnats, and have a beautiful wife like myself. I know what I shall do. Hurrah!" And he flew away into the air, and began catching gnats.

"O come back, come back," cried Tom, "you beautiful creature! I have no one to play with, and I am so lonely here. If you will but come back, I will never try to catch you."

"I don't care whether you do or not," said the dragon-fly, "for you can't. But when I have had my dinner and looked a little about this pretty place, I will come back, and have a little chat about all I have seen in my travels. Why, what a huge tree this is! and what huge leaves on it!"

It was only a big dock; but you know the dragon-fly had never seen any but little water-trees, so it did look very big to him. Besides, he was very short-sighted, as all dragon-flies are, and never could see a yard before his nose, any more than a great many other folks who are not half so handsome as he.

The dragon-fly did come back, and chatted away with Tom. He was very fond of talking about all the wonderful things he saw in the trees and the meadows; and Tom liked to listen to him, for he had forgotten

all about them. So in a little while they became great friends.

And the trout and he made it up (for trout very soon forget if they have been frightened and hurt). So Tom used to play with them at hare and hounds, and great fun they had; and he used to try to leap out of the water, head over heels, as they did before a shower came on, but somehow he never could manage it.

One day Tom had a new adventure. He was sitting on a water-lily leaf, he and his friend the dragon-fly, watching the gnats dance. The dragon-fly had eaten as many as he wanted, and was sitting quite still and sleepy, for it was very hot and bright.

Suddenly Tom heard the strangest noise up the stream—cooing, and grunting, and whining, and squeaking, as if you had put into a bag two stockdoves, nine mice, three guinea-pigs, and a blind puppy, and left them there to settle themselves and make music.

He looked up the water, and there he saw a sight as strange as the noise—a great ball

rolling over and over down the stream, seeming one moment of soft brown fur, and the next of shining glass; and yet it was not a ball, for sometimes it broke up and streamed away in pieces, and then it joined again; and all the while the noise came out of it louder and louder.

Tom asked the dragon-fly what it could be; but, of course, with his short sight, he could not even see it, though it was not ten yards away. So he took the neatest little header into the water, and started off to see for himself; and when he came near, the ball turned out to be four or five beautiful creatures, many times larger than Tom, who were swimming about, and rolling, and diving, and twisting, and wrestling, and cuddling, and kissing, and biting, and scratching in the most charming fashion that ever was seen.

But when the biggest of them saw Tom, she darted out from the rest, and cried in the water-language sharply enough, "Quick, children; here is something to eat indeed!" and came at poor Tom, showing such a

wicked pair of eyes, and such a set of sharp teeth in a grinning mouth, that Tom slipped in between the water-lily roots as fast as he could, and then turned round and made faces at her.

"Come out," said the wicked old otter, "or it will be worse for you."

But Tom looked at her from between two thick roots, and shook them with all his might, making horrible faces all the while.

"Come away, children," said the otter in disgust; "it is not worth eating after all. It is only a nasty eft."

"I am not an eft!" said Tom; "efts have tails."

"You are an eft," said the otter very positively: "I see your two hands quite plain, and I know you have a tail."

"I tell you I have not," said Tom. "Look here!" and he turned his pretty little self quite round; and, sure enough, he had no more tail than you.

"I say you are an eft," said the otter, "and therefore you are. You may stay there till the salmon eat you" (she knew the salmon

would not, but she wanted to frighten poor Tom). "Ha! ha! they will eat you, and we will eat them," and the otter laughed such a wicked, cruel laugh.

"What are salmon?" asked Tom.

"Fish, you eft—great fish, nice fish to eat. They are the lords of the fish, and we are lords of the salmon," and she laughed again. "We hunt them up and down the pools, and drive them up into a corner, the silly things; and we catch them, but we disdain to eat them all: we just bite out their soft throats and suck their sweet juice—oh, so good!" (and she licked her wicked lips)—"and then throw them away, and go and catch another. They are coming soon, children, coming soon; I can smell the rain coming up off the sea, and then hurrah for plenty of eating all day long!"

"And where do they come from?" asked Tom.

"Out of the sea, eft, where they might stay and be safe if they liked. But the silly things come into the great river down below, and we come up to watch for them; and

when they go down again we go down and follow them. And there we have jolly days along the shore, and toss and roll in the breakers, and sleep snug in the warm, dry crags. Ah, that is a merry life, too, children, if it were not for those horrid men."

"What are men?" asked Tom; but somehow he seemed to know before he asked.

"Two-legged things, eft. And now I come to look at you, they are actually something like you, if you had not a tail, only a great deal bigger, worse luck for us; and they catch the fish with hooks and lines, which get into our feet sometimes, and set pots along the rocks to catch lobsters. They speared my poor dear husband as he went out to find something for me to eat; and I saw them carry him away upon a pole. Ah, he lost his life for your sakes, my children, poor dear, obedient creature that he was."

And the otter grew so sentimental that she sailed solemnly away down the burn, and Tom saw her no more for that time.

But he could not help thinking of what the otter had said about the great river and the broad sea. And as he thought, he longed to go and see them—to get out into the wide, wide world, and enjoy all the wonderful sights of which he was sure it was full.

And once he set off to go down the stream. But the stream was very low, and when he came to the shallows he could not keep under water, for there was no water left to keep under. So the sun burned his back and made him sick; and he went back again, and lay quiet in the pool for a whole week more.

And then, on the evening of a very hot day, he saw a sight.

He had been very stupid all day, and so had the trout; for they would not move an inch to take a fly, but lay dozing at the bottom under the shade of the stones; and Tom lay dozing too, and was glad to cuddle their smooth, cool sides, for the water was quite warm and unpleasant.

But toward evening it grew suddenly dark,

and Tom looked up and saw a blanket of black clouds lying right across the valley above his head, resting on the crags right and left. He felt not quite frightened, but very still; for everything was still. There was not a whisper of wind, nor a chirp of a bird to be heard; and next a few great drops of rain fell plop into the water, and one hit Tom on the nose, and made him pop his head down quickly enough.

And then the thunder roared, and the lightning flashed, and leapt across Vendale and back again, from cloud to cloud and cliff to cliff, till the very rocks in the stream seemed to shake. And Tom looked up at it through the water, and thought it the finest thing he had ever seen in his life.

But out of the water he dared not put his head, for the rain came down by bucketfuls; and soon the stream rose, and rushed down, higher and higher, and fouler and fouler.

Tom could hardly stand against it, and hid behind a rock. But the trout did not; for out they rushed from among the stones, and began gobbling the beetles and

leeches in the most greedy and quarrelsome way.

And now, by the flashes of the lightning, Tom saw a new sight—all the bottom of the stream alive with great eels, turning and twisting along, all down stream and away. They had been hiding for weeks past in the cracks of the rocks and in burrows in the mud, and Tom had hardly ever seen them except now and then at night ; but now they were all out, and went hurrying past him so fiercely and wildly that he was quite frightened. And as they hurried past he could hear them say to each other, "We must run, we must run. What a jolly thunderstorm ! Down to the sea, down to the sea !"

And then the otter came up with all her brood, and she spied Tom as she came by, and said,—

"Now is your time, eft, if you want to see the world.—Come along, children, never mind those nasty eels ; we shall breakfast on salmon to-morrow. Down to the sea, down to the sea !"

Then came a flash brighter than all the

rest, and by the light of it—in the thousandth part of a second they were gone again; but he had seen them, he was certain of it—three beautiful little white girls, with their arms twined round each other's necks, floated down the torrent as they sang, "Down to the sea, down to the sea!"

"O stay! wait for me!" cried Tom. But they were gone; yet he could hear their voices clear and sweet through the roar of thunder and water and wind, singing as they died away, "Down to the sea!"

"Down to the sea?" said Tom. "Everything is going to the sea, and I will go too."

And when the daylight came Tom found himself out in the salmon river. He thought nothing about what the river was like. All his fancy was to get down to the wide, wide sea.

And after a while he came to a place where the river spread out into broad, still, shallow reaches, so wide that little Tom, as he put his head out of the water, could hardly see across.

And there he stopped. He got a little

frightened. "This must be the sea," he thought. "What a wide place it is! If I go on into it I shall surely lose my way, or some strange thing will bite me. I will stop here and look out for the otter, or the eels, or some one to tell me where I shall go."

So he went back a little way, and crept into a crack of the rock. And after a while he saw a sight which made him jump up, for he knew in a moment it was one of the things which he had come to look for.

Such a fish! Shining silver from head to tail, and here and there a crimson dot; with a grand hooked nose and grand curling lip, and a grand bright eye, looking round him as proudly as a king, and surveying the water right and left as if all belonged to him. Surely he must be the salmon, the king of all the fish.

Tom was so frightened that he longed to creep into a hole; but he need not have been, for salmon are all true gentlemen, and never harm or quarrel with any one, but go about their own business, and leave rude fellows to themselves.

The salmon looked at him full in the face, and then went on without minding him, with a swish or two of his tail which made the stream boil again. And in a few minutes came another, and then four or five, and so on; and all passed Tom, rushing and plunging up the cataract with strong strokes of their silver tails, now and then leaping clean out of the water and up over a rock, shining gloriously for a moment in the bright sun.

And at last one came up bigger than all the rest; but he came slowly, and stopped, and looked back, and seemed very anxious and busy. And Tom saw that he was helping another salmon, an especially handsome one, which had not a single spot upon it, but was clothed in pure silver from nose to tail.

"My dear," said the great fish to his companion, who was none other than his wife, "you really look dreadfully tired. Do rest yourself behind this rock," and he shoved her gently with his nose to the rock where Tom sat.

Then he saw Tom, and looked at him very fiercely one moment, as if he was going to bite him.

"What do you want here?" he said very fiercely.

"Oh, don't hurt me!" cried Tom. "I only want to look at you; you are so handsome."

"Ah?" said the salmon. "I really beg your pardon; I see what you are, my little dear. I have met one or two creatures like you before, and found them very agreeable and well-behaved. I hope we shall not be in your way here. As soon as this lady is rested we shall proceed on our journey."

"So you have seen things like me before?" asked Tom.

"Several times, my dear. Indeed, it was only last night that one at the river's mouth came and warned me and my wife of some new stake-nets which had got into the stream, and showed us the way round them in the most charmingly obliging way."

"So there are babies in the sea?" cried Tom, and clapped his little hands. "Then

I shall have some one to play with there? How delightful!"

"Were there no babies up this stream?" asked the lady salmon.

"No; and I grew so lonely, for I had nothing to play with but caddises and dragon-flies and trout."

"Ugh!" cried the lady, "what low company!"

"My dear, if he has been in low company, he has certainly not learnt their low manners," said the salmon.

"No, indeed, poor little dear; but how sad for him to live among such people as caddises, and dragon-flies, too. Why, they are not even good to eat; for I tried them once, and they are all hard and empty."

CHAPTER IV.

SO the salmon went up, after Tom had warned them of the wicked old otter; and Tom went down, but slowly and cautiously, coasting along the shore.

And as he went he had a very strange adventure.

It was a clear, still September night, and the moon shone so brightly down through the water that he could not sleep, though he shut his eyes as tight as possible. So at last he came up to the top, and sat upon a little point of rock, and looked up at the broad yellow moon, and wondered what she was, and thought that she looked at him.

Suddenly he saw a beautiful sight. A bright red light moved along the river-side, and threw down into the water a long tap-root of flame. Tom, curious little rogue that

he was, must needs go and see what it was; so he swam to the shore, and met the light as it stopped over a shallow run at the edge of a low rock.

And there, underneath the light, lay five or six great salmon, looking up at the flame with their great goggle eyes, and wagging their tails as if they were very much pleased at it.

Tom came to the top to look at this wonderful light nearer, and made a splash.

And he heard a voice say,—

"There was a fish rose."

He did not know what the words meant, but he seemed to know the sound of them, and to know the voice which spoke them; and he saw on the bank three great two-legged creatures, one of whom held the light, flaring and sputtering, and another a long pole. And he knew that they were men, and was frightened, and crept into a hole in the rock, from which he could see what went on.

The man with the torch bent down over the water and looked in, and then he said,—

"Tak' that muckle fellow, lad, and haud your hand steady."

Tom felt that there was some danger coming, and longed to warn the foolish salmon. But before he could make up his mind, down came the pole through the water; there was a fearful splash and struggle, and Tom saw that the poor salmon was speared right through, and was lifted out of the water.

And then, from behind, there sprang on these three men three other men, and there were shouts and blows and words which Tom recollected to have heard before; and he shuddered and turned sick at them now, for he felt somehow that they were strange, and ugly, and wrong, and horrible. And it all began to come back to him. They were men; and they were fighting — savage, desperate, up-and-down fighting, such as Tom had seen too many times before. And he stopped his little ears, and longed to swim away; but he dared not stir out of his hole.

All of a sudden there were a tremendous splash and a frightful flash and a hissing, and all was still.

For into the water, close to Tom, fell one of the men—he who held the light in his hand. Into the swift river he sank, and rolled over and over in the current. Tom heard the men above run along, seemingly looking for him ; but he drifted down into the deep hole below, and there lay quite still, and they could not find him.

Tom waited a long time, till all was quiet ; and then he peeped out, and saw the man lying. At last he screwed up his courage and swam down to him. "Perhaps," he thought, "the water has made him fall asleep, as it did me."

Then he went nearer. The moon shone so bright that Tom could see every feature ; and as he saw he recollected, bit by bit, it was his old master, Grimes.

Tom turned tail, and swam away as fast as he could.

"Oh dear me !" he thought ; "now he will turn into a water-baby. What a nasty,

troublesome one he will be! And perhaps he will find me out, and beat me again."

So he went up the river again a little way, and lay there the rest of the night under an alder root; but when morning came he longed to go down again to the big pool, and see whether Mr. Grimes had turned into a water-baby yet.

So he went very carefully, peeping round all the rocks and hiding under all the roots. Mr. Grimes lay there still; he had not turned into a water-baby. In the afternoon Tom went back again. He could not rest till he had found out what had become of Mr. Grimes. But this time Mr. Grimes was gone, and Tom made up his mind that he was turned into a water-baby.

He might have made himself easy, poor little man: Mr. Grimes did not turn into a water-baby, or anything like one at all. But he did not make himself easy; and for a long time he was fearful lest he should meet Grimes suddenly in some deep pool. He could not know that the fairies had carried him away, and put him where they put every-

thing which falls into the water—exactly where it ought to be. But, do you know, what had happened to Mr. Grimes had such an effect on him that he never poached salmon any more.

Then Tom went on down, for he was afraid of staying near Grimes; and as he went all the vale looked sad. But on and on he held, till he saw a long way off a huge red buoy through the fog. And then he found, to his surprise, the stream turned round and running up inland.

It was the tide, of course; but Tom knew nothing of the tide. He only knew that in a minute more the water, which had been fresh, turned salt all round him. And then there came a change over him. He felt strong, and light, and fresh, and gave three skips out of the water, a yard high, and head over heels, just as the salmon do when they first touch the noble, rich salt water.

He did not care now for the tide being against him. The red buoy was in sight, dancing in the open sea; and to the buoy he would go, and to it he went. He passed

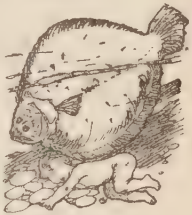
great shoals of bass and mullet, and once he passed a great black shining seal, who was coming in after the mullet. The seal put his head and shoulders out of water, and stared at him, looking exactly like a fat old greasy negro with a gray pate. And Tom, instead of being frightened, said, "How d'ye do, sir? what a beautiful place the sea is!" And the old seal, instead of trying to bite him, looked at him with his soft, sleepy, winking eyes, and said, "Good tide to you, my little man; are you looking for your brothers and sisters? I passed them all at play outside."

"Oh, then," said Tom, "I shall have playfellows at last," and he swam on to the buoy, and got upon it (for he was quite out of breath) and sat there, and looked round for water-babies; but there were none to be seen.

Then when the tide turned he left the buoy, and swam round and round in search of them; but in vain. Sometimes he thought he heard them laughing; but it was only the laughter of the ripples. And sometimes he thought he saw them at the bottom; but it

was only white and pink shells. And once he was sure he had found one, for he saw two bright eyes peeping out of the sand.

So he dived down, and began scraping the sand away, and cried, "Don't hide; I do want some one to play with so much!" And out jumped a great turbot with his ugly eyes and mouth all awry, knocking poor Tom over. And he sat down at the bottom of the sea, and cried salt tears from sheer disappointment.



To have come all this way and faced so many dangers, and yet to find no water-babies! How hard! And Tom sat upon the buoy long days, long weeks, looking out to sea, and wondering when the water-babies would come back; and yet they never came.

Then he began to ask all the strange things which came in out of the sea if they had seen any; and some said "Yes," and some said nothing at all.

He asked the bass and the pollock; but they were so greedy after the shrimps that they did not care to answer him a word.

Then there came in a whole fleet of purple sea-snails, floating along, each on a sponge full of foam, and Tom said, "Where do you come from, you pretty creatures? and have you seen the water-babies?"

And the sea-snails answered, "Whence we come we know not, and whither we are going who can tell? Yes; perhaps we have seen the water-babies. We have seen many strange things as we sailed along." And they floated away, the happy, stupid things, and all went ashore upon the sands.

Then there came in a great lazy sunfish, as big as a fat pig cut in half; and he seemed to have been cut in half too, and squeezed in a clothes-press till he was flat; but to all his big body and big fins he had only a little rabbit's mouth, no bigger than Tom's; and when Tom questioned him, he answered in a little squeaky, feeble voice,—

"I'm sure I don't know; I've lost my way."

And when Tom asked him again, he could only answer, "I've lost my way. Don't talk to me; I want to think."

And then Tom left the buoy, and used to go along the sands and round the rocks, and come out in the night and sit upon a point of rock, among the shining seaweeds, in the low October tides, and cry and call for the water-babies; but he never heard a voice call in return. And at last, with his fretting and crying, he grew quite lean and thin.

But one day among the rocks he found a playfellow. It was not a water-baby, alas! but it was a lobster. Tom had never seen a lobster before, and he was mightily taken with this one; for he thought him the most curious, odd, ridiculous creature he had ever seen.

He had one claw knobbed and the other jagged; and Tom delighted in watching him hold on to the seaweed with his knobbed claw, while he cut up salads with his jagged one and then put them into his mouth, after smelling at them, like a monkey. And always the little barnacles on his back threw out their casting-nets and swept the water, and came in for their share of whatever there was for dinner.

But Tom was most astonished to see how he fired himself off—snap! like the leap-frogs which you make out of a goose's breast-bone. Certainly he took the most wonderful shots, and backwards too. For if he wanted to go into a narrow crack ten yards off, what do you think he did?

If he had gone in head foremost, of course he could not have turned round. So he used to turn his tail to it, and lay his long horns straight down his back to guide him, and twist his eyes back till they almost came out of their sockets, and then made ready, present, fire, snap!—and away he went, pop into the hole; and peeped out and twiddled his whiskers, as much as to say, "You couldn't do that."

Tom asked him about water-babies. "Yes," he said. He had seen them often. But he did not think much of them. They were meddlesome little creatures that went about helping fish and shells which got into scrapes.

He was a conceited fellow, the old lobster, and not very civil to Tom. But he was so funny and Tom so lonely that he could not

quarrel with him ; and they used to sit in holes in the rocks, and chat for hours.

And about this time there happened to Tom a very strange and important adventure.

I hope that you have not forgotten the little white lady all this while. At least here she comes, looking like a clean, white, good little darling, as she always was and always will be. For it befell, in the pleasant, short December days, that Sir John was so busy hunting that nobody at home, not even My Lady, could get a word out of him.

So she started for the seaside with all the children.

Now, it befell that on the very shore, and over the very rocks, where Tom was sitting with his friend the lobster, there walked one day the little white lady, Ellie herself, and with her a very wise man indeed—Professor Ptthmllnsprts.

Ellie and he were walking on the rocks, and he was showing her about one in ten thousand of all the beautiful and curious things which are to be seen there. But little Ellie was not satisfied with them at all. She

liked much better to play with live children, or even with dolls, which she could pretend were alive; and at last she said honestly, "I don't care about all these things, because they can't play with me or talk to me. If there were little children now in the water, as there used to be, and I could see them, I should like that."

"Children in the water, you strange little duck?" said the professor.

"Yes," said Ellie. "I know there used to be children in the water, and mermaids too, and mermen. I saw them all in a picture at home of a beautiful lady sailing in a car drawn by dolphins, and babies flying round her, and one sitting in her lap; and the mermaids swimming and playing, and the mermen trumpeting on shells. It hangs on the great staircase, and I have looked at it ever since I was a baby, and dreamt about it a hundred times; and it is so beautiful that it must be true."

But the professor had not the least notion of allowing that things were true merely because people thought them beautiful.

The professor, indeed, said that no man was forced to believe anything to be true but what he could see, hear, taste, or handle.

Now, little Ellie was, I suppose, a stupid little girl, for in reply to this she only asked the same question over again,—

"But why are there not water-babies?"

I trust and hope that it was because the professor trod at that moment on the edge of a very sharp mussel, and hurt one of his corns sadly, that he answered quite sharply,—

"Because there ain't."

And then he groped with his net under the weeds so violently that, as it befell, he caught poor little Tom.

He felt the net very heavy, and lifted it out quickly, with Tom all entangled in the meshes.

"Dear me!" he cried. "What a large pink *Holothurian;* with hands, too! It must be connected with *Synapta*."

And he took him out.

"It has actually eyes!" he cried. "Why,

it must be a *Cephalopod!* This is most extraordinary!"

"No, I ain't!" cried Tom, as loud as he could, for he did not like to be called bad names.

"It is a water-baby," cried Ellie, and of course it was.

"Water-fiddlesticks, my dear!" said the professor, and he turned away sharply.

There was no denying it. It was a water-baby, and he had said a moment ago that there were none. What was he to do?

He would have liked, of course, to have taken Tom home in a bucket. He would have kept him alive, and petted him (for he was a very kind old gentleman), and written a book about him. But—what would Ellie say, after what he had just told her?

Now Tom had been in the most horrible and unspeakable fright all the while, and had kept as quiet as he could. But when the professor poked him, it was more than he could bear; and between fright and rage he turned to bay as valiantly as a mouse in

a corner, and bit the professor's finger till it bled.

"Oh! ah! yah!" cried he, and glad of an excuse to be rid of Tom, dropped him on to the seaweed; and thence he dived into the water, and was gone in a moment.

"But it was a water-baby, and I heard it speak!" cried Ellie. "Ah, it is gone!" And she jumped down off the rock to try to catch Tom before he slipped into the sea.

Too late! and what was worse, as she sprang down she slipped, and fell some six feet, with her head on a sharp rock, and lay quite still.

The professor picked her up, and tried to waken her, and called to her, and cried over her, for he loved her very much; but she would not waken at all. So he took her up in his arms and carried her to her governess, and they all went home; and little Ellie was put to bed, and lay there quite still. Only now and then she woke up and called out about the water-baby; but no one knew what she meant, and the professor did not tell, for he was ashamed to do so.

And after a week, one moonlight night, the fairies came flying in at the window, and brought her such a pretty pair of wings that she could not help putting them on; and she flew with them out of the window, and over the land, and over the sea, and up through the clouds, and nobody heard or saw anything of her for a very long while.

And this is why they say that no one has ever yet seen a water-baby.

CHAPTER V.

BUT what became of little Tom?

He slipped away off the rocks into the water, as I said before. But he could not help thinking of little Ellie. He did not remember who she was; but he knew that she was a little girl, though she was a hundred times as big as he.

He was going along the rocks in three-fathom water when he saw a round cage of green withes, and inside it, looking very much ashamed of himself, sat his friend the lobster.

"What, have you been naughty, and have they put you in the lock-up?" asked Tom.

The lobster felt a little indignant at such a notion, but he only said, "I can't get out."

"Why did you get in?"

"After that nasty piece of dead fish."

"Where did you get in?"

"Through that round hole at the top."

"Then why don't you get out through it?"

"Because I can't," and the lobster twiddled his horns more fiercely than ever, but he was forced to confess.

"I have jumped upwards, downwards, backwards, and sideways, at least four thousand times, and I can't get out."

Tom looked at the trap, and having more wit than the lobster, he saw plainly enough what was the matter.

"Stop a bit," said Tom. "Turn your tail up to me, and I'll pull you through hindforemost, and then you won't stick in the spikes."

But the lobster was so stupid and clumsy that he couldn't hit the hole. Tom reached and caught hold of him; and then, as was to be expected, the clumsy lobster pulled him in headforemost.

"Hullo! here is a pretty business," said Tom. "Now take your great claws and break the points off those spikes, and then we shall both get out easily."

"I never thought of that," said the lobster.

But they had not got half the spikes away when they saw a great dark cloud over them, and, lo and behold, it was the otter.

How she did grin and grin when she saw Tom! "Yar!" said she, "you little meddlesome wretch, I have you now!" And she crawled all over the pot to get in.

Tom was horribly frightened when she found the hole in the top and squeezed herself right down through it, all eyes and teeth. But no sooner was her head inside than Mr. Lobster caught her by the nose and held on.

And there they were all three in the pot, rolling over and over, and very tight packing it was. And the lobster tore at the otter, and the otter tore at the lobster, and both squeezed poor Tom till he had no breath left in his body; and I don't know what would have happened to him if he had not got on the otter's back and out of the hole.

He was right glad when he got out; but he would not desert his friend who had saved him, and the first time he saw his tail uppermost he caught hold of it, and pulled with all his might.

But the lobster would not let go.

"Come along," said Tom; "don't you see she is dead?" And so she was, quite drowned and dead.

And that was the end of the wicked otter.

But the lobster would not let go.

"Come along, you stupid old stick-in-the-mud," cried Tom, "or the fisherman will catch you!" And that was true, for Tom felt some one above beginning to haul up the pot.

But the lobster would not let go.

Tom saw the fisherman haul him up to the boatside, and thought it was all up with him. But when Mr. Lobster saw the fisherman, he gave such a furious and tremendous snap that he snapped out of his hand, and out of the pot, and safe into the sea. But he left his knobbed claw behind him; for it never came into his stupid head to let go after all, so he just shook his claw off as the easier method.

Tom asked the lobster why he never thought of letting go. He said very determinedly that it was a point of honour among

lobsters. And now happened to Tom a most wonderful thing; for he had not left the lobster five minutes before he came upon a real live water-baby, sitting on the white sand, very busy about a little point of rock. And when it saw Tom it looked up for a moment, and then cried, "Why, you are not one of us. You are a new baby! Oh, how delightful!"

And it ran to Tom, and Tom ran to it, and they hugged and kissed each other for ever so long, they did not know why. But they did not want any introductions there under the water.

"Now," said the baby, "come and help me, or I shall not have finished before my brothers and sisters come, and it is time to go home."

"What shall I help you at?"

"At this poor dear little rock: a great clumsy boulder came rolling by, and knocked all its head off, and rubbed off all its flowers. And now I must plant it again with seaweeds

and coralline and anemones, and make it the prettiest little rock-garden on all the shore."

So they worked away at the rock, and planted it, and smoothed the sand down round it, and capital fun they had till the tide began to turn. And then Tom heard all the other babies coming, laughing and singing, and shouting and romping; and the noise they made was just like the noise of the ripple.

And in they came, dozens and dozens of them, some bigger than Tom and some smaller, all in the neatest little white bathing-dresses; and when they found that he was a new baby, they hugged him and kissed him, and then put him in the middle and danced round him on the sand, and there was no one ever so happy as poor little Tom.

"Now then," they cried all at once, "we must come away home, we must come away home, or the tide will leave us dry. We have mended all the broken seaweed, and put all the rock pools in order, and planted all the shells again in the sand, and nobody will see where the ugly storm swept in last week."

And this is the reason why the rock pools

She took Tom in her arms.

are always so neat and clean: the water-babies come inshore after every storm to sweep them out, and comb them down, and put them all to rights again.

And there were the water-babies in thousands, more than Tom, or you either, could count. But I wish Tom had given up all his naughty tricks, and left off tormenting dumb animals, now that he had plenty of playfellows to amuse him. Instead of that, I am sorry to say he would meddle with the creatures, all but the water-snakes, for they would stand no nonsense.

The other children warned him, and said, "Take care what you are at. Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid is coming." But Tom never heeded them, being quite riotous with high spirits and good luck, till, one Friday morning early, Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid came indeed.

A very tremendous lady she was; and when the children saw her they all stood in a row, very upright indeed, and smoothed down their bathing-dresses, and put their hands behind them.

And she had on a black bonnet and a black shawl, and a pair of large green spectacles, and a great hooked nose, and under her arm she carried a great birch rod. Indeed, she was so ugly that Tom was tempted to make faces at her, but did not, for he did not admire the look of the birch rod under her arm.

And she looked at the children one by one, and seemed very much pleased with them; and then began giving them all sorts of nice sea-things—sea-cakes, sea-apples, sea-oranges, sea-bull's-eyes, sea-toffee; and to the very best of all she gave sea-ices, made out of sea-cows' cream, which never melt under water.

Now little Tom watched all these sweet things given away till his mouth watered and his eyes grew as round as an owl's. For he hoped that his turn would come at last; and so it did. The lady called him up, and held out her fingers with something in them, and popped it into his mouth; and, lo and behold, it was a nasty cold hard pebble.

"You are a very cruel woman," said he, and began to whimper.

"And you are a very cruel boy, who puts pebbles into the sea-anemones' mouths. As you did to them, so I must do to you."

"Who told you that?" said Tom.

"You did yourself, this very minute."

Tom had never opened his lips, so he was very much taken aback indeed.

"Yes; every one tells me what they have done wrong, without knowing it themselves. So there is no use trying to hide anything from me. Now go, and be a good boy, and I will put no more pebbles in your mouth if you put none in other creatures'."

"I did not know there was any harm in it," said Tom.

"Then you know now. The lobster did not know that there was any harm in getting into the lobster-pot; but it caught him, all the same."

"Dear me," thought Tom, "she knows everything!" And so she did indeed.

"You thought me very ugly just now, did you not?" she asked.

Tom hung down his head, and got very red about the ears.

"And I am very ugly. I am the ugliest fairy in the world, and I shall be till people behave themselves as they ought to do. And then I shall grow as handsome as my sister, who is the loveliest fairy in the world, and her name is Mrs. Doasyouwouldbedoneby. So she begins where I end, and I begin where she ends; and those who will not listen to her must listen to me, as you will see.

"And now do you be a good boy," she continued, "and do as you would be done by, which they did not; and then, when my sister, MADAME DOASYOUWOULDBEDONEBY, comes on Sunday, perhaps she will take notice of you, and teach you how to behave. She understands that better than I do." And so she went.

Tom determined to be a very good boy all Saturday, and he was; and when Sunday morning came, sure enough MRS. DOASYOUWOULDBEDONEBY came too. Whereat all the little children began dancing and clapping their hands, and Tom danced too with all his might.

And as for the pretty lady, I cannot tell you what the colour of her hair was, or of her eyes. No more could Tom; for when any one looks at her, all they can think of is that she has the sweetest, kindest, tenderest, funniest, merriest face they ever saw or want to see. But Tom saw that she was a very tall woman, as tall as her sister; but instead of being gnarly and horny, and scaly, and prickly, like her, she was the most nice, soft, fat, smooth, pussy, cuddly, delicious creature who ever nursed a baby.

And therefore, when the children saw her, they naturally all caught hold of her, and pulled her till she sat down on a stone, and climbed into her lap, and clung round her neck, and caught hold of her hands; and then they all put their thumbs into their mouths, and began cuddling and purring like so many kittens, as they ought to have done, while those who could get nowhere else sat down on the sand and cuddled her feet. And Tom stood staring at them, for he could not understand what it was all about.

"And who are you, you little darling?" she said.

"Oh, that is the new baby!" they all cried, pulling their thumbs out of their mouths; "and he never had any mother," and they all put their thumbs back again, for they did not wish to lose any time.

"Then I will be his mother, and he shall have the very best place; so get out, all of you, this moment."

So she took Tom in her arms, and laid him in the softest place of all, and kissed him, and patted him, and talked to him, tenderly and low, such things as he had never heard before in his life; and Tom looked up into her eyes, and loved her, and loved, till he fell fast asleep from pure love.

And when he woke she was telling the children a story. And what story did she tell them? One story she told them, which begins every Christmas Eve, and yet never ends at all for ever and ever; and as she went on, the children took their thumbs out of their mouths and listened quite seriously;

but not sadly at all, for she never told them anything sad; and Tom listened too, and never grew tired of listening. And he listened so long that he fell fast asleep again, and when he woke the lady was nursing him still.

"Don't go away," said little Tom. "This is so nice. I never had any one to cuddle me before."

"Don't go away," said all the children; "you have not sung us one song."

"Well, I have time for only one; so what shall it be?"

"The doll you lost! the doll you lost!" cried all the babies at once.

So the strange fairy sang,—

"I once had a sweet little doll, dears,
The prettiest doll in the world;
Her cheeks were so red and so white, dears,
And her hair was so charmingly curled.
But I lost my poor little doll, dears,
As I played in the heath one day;
And I cried for her more than a week, dears,
But I never could find where she lay.

"I found my poor little doll, dears,
As I played in the heath one day;
Folks say she is terribly changed, dears,
For her paint is all washed away,
And her arms trodden off by the cows, dears,
And her hair not the least bit curled;
Yet for old sakes' sake she is still, dears,
The prettiest doll in the world."

"Now," said the fairy to Tom, "will you be a good boy for my sake, and torment no more sea-beasts till I come back?"

"And you will cuddle me again?" said poor little Tom.

"Of course I will, you little duck. I should like to take you with me and cuddle you all the way, only I must not," and away she went.

So Tom really tried to be a good boy, and tormented sea-beasts no more; and he is quite alive, I assure you, still.

CHAPTER VI.

NOW you may fancy that Tom was quite good when he had everything that he could want or wish; but you would be very much mistaken. For he grew so fond of the sea-bull's-eyes and sea-lollipops that his foolish little head could think of nothing else; and what happened then?

That he began to watch the lady to see where she kept the sweet things, till he found out that she kept them in a beautiful mother-of-pearl cabinet away in a deep crack of the rocks.

And one night, when all the other children were asleep, and he could not sleep for thinking of lollipops, he crept among the rocks, and got to the cabinet, and, behold, it was open!

But when he saw all the nice things inside, instead of being delighted, he was quite

frightened, and wished he had never come there. And then he would only touch them, and he did; and then he would only taste one, and he did; and then he would only eat one, and he did; and then he would only eat two, and then three, and so on; and then he was terrified lest she should come and catch him, and began gobbling them down so fast that he did not taste them or have any pleasure in them; and then he felt sick, and would have only one more; and then only one more again; and so on till he had eaten them all up.

And all the while, close behind him, stood Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid.

She took off her spectacles, because she did not like to see too much; and in her pity she arched up her eyebrows into her very hair, and her eyes grew so wide that they would have taken in all the sorrows of the world, and filled with great big tears, as they too often do.

But all she said was,—

"Ah, you poor little dear! you are just like all the rest."

But she said it to herself, and Tom neither heard nor saw her.

She just said nothing at all about the matter, not even when Tom came next day with the rest for sweet things. He was horribly afraid of coming; but he was still more afraid of staying away, lest any one should suspect him. He was dreadfully afraid, too, lest there should be no sweets. But, behold, she pulled out just as many as ever; which astonished Tom, and frightened him still more.

And when the fairy looked him full in the face he shook from head to foot; however, she gave him his share like the rest, and he thought within himself that she could not have found him out.

But when he put the sweets into his mouth he hated the taste of them, and they made him so sick that he had to get away as fast as he could; and terribly sick he was, and very cross and unhappy, all the week after.

Then when next week came he had his share again; and again the fairy looked him

full in the face, but more sadly than she had ever looked. And he could not bear the sweets, but took them again in spite of himself.

And when Mrs. Doasyouwouldbedoneby came, he wanted to be cuddled like the rest; but she said very seriously,—

"I should like to cuddle you; but I cannot, you are so horny and prickly."

And Tom looked at himself; and he was all over prickles, just like a sea-egg.

What could Tom do now but go away and hide in a corner and cry? For nobody would play with him, and he knew full well why.

And he was so miserable all that week that when the ugly fairy came and looked at him once more full in the face, he thrust the sweetmeats away, saying, "No, I don't want any; I can't bear them now," and then burst out crying, and told her every word as it happened.

He was horribly frightened when he had done so, for he expected her to punish him very severely. But instead she only took

him up and kissed him—which was not quite pleasant, for her chin was very bristly indeed; but he was so lonely-hearted he thought that rough kissing was better than none.

"I will forgive you, little man," she said. "I always forgive every one the moment they tell me the truth of their own accord."

"Then you will take away all these nasty prickles?"

"That is a very different matter. You put them there yourself, and only you can take them away."

"But how can I do that?" asked Tom, crying afresh.

"Well, I think it is time for you to go to school; so I shall fetch you a schoolmistress, who will teach you how to get rid of your prickles." And so she went away.

Tom was frightened at the notion of a schoolmistress, for he thought she would certainly come with a birch rod or a cane; but he comforted himself at last that she might be something like the old woman in

Vendale—which she was not in the least; for when the fairy brought her she was the most beautiful little girl that ever was seen, with long curls floating behind her like a golden cloud, and long robes floating all round her like a silver one.

"There he is," said the fairy; "and you must teach him to be good, whether you like or not."

"I know," said the little girl. But she did not seem quite to like, for she put her finger in her mouth and looked at Tom under her brows; and Tom put his finger in his mouth and looked at her under his brows, for he was horribly ashamed of himself.

The little girl seemed hardly to know how to begin; and perhaps she would never have begun at all if poor Tom had not burst out crying, and begged her to teach him to be good and help him to cure his prickles. At that she grew so tender-hearted that she began teaching him as prettily as ever child was taught in the world.

And what did the little girl teach Tom? She taught him, first, what you have been

taught ever since you said your first prayers at your mother's knees; but she taught him much more simply. For the lessons in that world, my child, have no such hard words in them as the lessons in this, and therefore the water-babies like them better than you like your lessons, and long to learn them more and more.

So she taught Tom every day in the week; only on Sundays she always went away home, and the kind fairy took her place. And before she had taught Tom many Sundays his prickles had vanished quite away, and his skin was smooth and clean again.

"Dear me!" said the little girl; "why, I know you now. You are the very same little chimney-sweep who came into my bedroom."

"Dear me!" cried Tom; "and I know you too now. You are the very little white lady whom I saw in bed." And he jumped at her, and longed to hug and kiss her; but did not, remembering that she was a lady born.

And then they began telling each other all their story—how he had got into the water, and she had fallen over the rock; and how he had swum down to the sea, and how she had flown out of the window; and then they both began over again, and I can't say which of the two talked fastest.

And then they set to work at their lessons again, and both liked them so well that they went on—well, till seven full years were past and gone.

You may fancy that Tom was quite content and happy all those seven years; but the truth is he was not. He had always one thing on his mind, and that was where little Ellie went when she went home on Sundays.

To a very beautiful place, she said.

But what was the beautiful place like, and where was it?

Ah! that was just what she could not say.

All that good little Ellie could say was that it was worth all the rest of the world put together; and, of course, that only made Tom the more anxious to go likewise.

"Miss Ellie," he said at last, "I will know

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"Don't poke that poor crab about, Tom."

why I cannot go with you when you go home on Sundays, or I shall have no peace, and give you none either."

"You must ask the fairies that."

So when the fairy, Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid, came next, Tom asked her.

"Little boys who are only fit to play with sea-beasts cannot go there," she said. "Those who go there must go first where they do not like, and do what they do not like, and help somebody they do not like."

"Why, did Ellie do that?"

"Ask her."

And Ellie blushed, and said, "Yes, Tom. I did not like coming here at first; I was so much happier at home, where it is always Sunday. And I was afraid of you, Tom, at first, because—because——"

"Because I was all over prickles? But I am not prickly now, am I, Miss Ellie?"

"No," said Ellie. "I like you very much now; and I like coming here, too."

"And perhaps," said the fairy, "you will learn to like going where you don't like, and helping some one you don't like, as Ellie has."

But Tom put his finger in his mouth and hung his head down, for he did not see that at all.

So when Mrs. Doasyouwouldbedoneby came Tom asked her, for he thought in his little head, She is not so strict as her sister, and perhaps she will let me off more easily. But when he asked the second fairy she told him just what the first did, and in the very same words.

Tom was very unhappy at that; and when Ellie went home on Sunday he fretted and cried all day.

And when Ellie came back he was shy with her, for he fancied she looked down on him and thought him a coward. And poor Ellie was quite surprised and sad; and at last Tom burst out crying, but he would not tell her what was really in his mind.

And all the while he was eaten up with curiosity to know where Ellie went to, so that he began not to care for his playmates, and grew so discontented with everything round him that he did not care to stay, and did not care where he went.

"Well," he said, "I am so miserable here I'll go, if only you will go with me."

"Ah!" said Ellie, "I wish I might; but the fairy says that you must go alone if you go at all. Now don't poke that poor crab about, Tom" (for he was feeling very naughty and mischievous), "or the fairy will have to punish you."

Tom was very nearly saying, "I don't care if she does," but he stopped himself in time.

"I know what she wants me to do," he said, whining most dolefully. "She wants me to go after that horrid old Grimes. And if I find him, he will turn me into a chimney-sweep again, I know. That's what I have been afraid of all along."

"No, he won't; I know as much as that. Nobody can turn water-babies into sweeps, or hurt them at all, as long as they are good."

"Ah," said naughty Tom, "I see what you want: you are tired of me, and want to get rid of me."

Little Ellie opened her eyes very wide at that, and they were all brimming over with tears.

"O Tom, Tom!" she said very mournfully; and then she cried, "O Tom! where are you?"

And Tom cried, "O Ellie, where are you?"

For neither of them could see the other—not the least. Little Ellie vanished quite away, and Tom heard her voice calling him, and growing smaller and smaller, and fainter and fainter, till all was silent.

Who was frightened then but Tom? He swam up and down among the rocks, into all the halls and chambers, faster than ever he swam before, but could not find her. He shouted after her, but she did not answer; he asked all the other children, but they had not seen her; and at last he went up to the top of the water and began crying and screaming for Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid—which perhaps was the best thing to do, for she came in a moment.

"Oh!" said Tom—"oh dear, oh dear!

I have been naughty to Ellie, and I have killed her!"

"Not quite that," said the fairy; "but I have sent her away home, and she will not come back again for I do not know how long."

And at that Tom cried so bitterly that the salt sea was swelled with his tears, and the tide was one-third of an inch higher than it had been the day before.

"How cruel of you to send Ellie away!" sobbed Tom. "However, I will find her again if I go to the world's end to look for her."

The fairy did not slap Tom and tell him to hold his tongue, but took him on her lap very kindly. And then she told him how he had been in the nursery long enough, and must go out now and see the world if he intended ever to be a man; and how he must go all alone by himself, as every one else that ever was born has to go, and see with his own eyes, and smell with his own nose, and make his own bed and lie on it, and burn his own fingers if he put them into the fire.

And then she told him not to be afraid of anything he met, for nothing would harm him if he remembered all his lessons and did what he knew was right. And at last she comforted poor little Tom so much that he was quite eager to go, and wanted to set out that minute. "Only," he said, "if I might see Ellie once before I went!"

"Why do you want that?"

"Because—because I should be so much happier if I thought she had forgiven me."

And in the twinkling of an eye there stood Ellie, smiling, and looking so happy that Tom longed to kiss her, but was still afraid it would not be respectful, because she was a lady born.

"I am going, Ellie," said Tom, "I am going, if it is to the world's end. But I don't like going at all, and that's the truth."

"Pooh! pooh! pooh!" said the fairy. "You will like it very well indeed, you little rogue, and you know that at the bottom of your heart."

CHAPTER VII.

"NOW," said Tom, "I am ready to be off, if it's to the world's end."

"Ah!" said the fairy, "that is a brave, good boy. But you must go farther than the world's end if you want to find Mr. Grimes, for he is at the Other-end-of-Nowhere. You must go to Shiny Wall, and through the white gate that never was opened; and then you will come to Peace-pool, and Mother Carey's Haven, where the good whales go when they die. There Mother Carey will tell you the way to the Other-end-of-Nowhere, and there you will find Mr. Grimes."

"Oh dear!" said Tom. "But I do not know my way to Shiny Wall, or where it is at all."

"Little boys must take the trouble to

find out things for themselves, or they will never grow to be men; so that you must ask all the beasts in the sea and the birds in the air, and if you have been good to them, some of them will tell you the way to Shiny Wall."

"Well," said Tom, "I had better start at once.—Good-bye, Miss Ellie; you know I am getting a big boy, and I must go out and see the world."

"I know you must," said Ellie; "but you will not forget me, Tom. I shall wait here till you come."

And she shook hands with him and bade him good-bye. Then he asked all the beasts in the sea, and all the birds in the air; but none of them knew the way to Shiny Wall. For why? He was still too far down south.

Then he met a ship—a gallant ocean steamer; and he wondered how she went on without sails, and swam up to her to see. A school of dolphins were running races round and round her, and Tom asked them the way to Shiny Wall; but they did not know. Then he tried to find out how she moved,

and at last he saw her screw, and was so delighted with it that he played under her quarter all day, till he nearly had his nose knocked off by the fans, and thought it time to move.

Then he watched the sailors upon deck, and the ladies, with their bonnets and parasols; but none of them could see him, because their eyes were not opened—as, indeed, most people's eyes are not.

And he swam northward again, day after day, till at last he met the King of the Herrings, with a currycomb growing out of his nose, and a sprat in his mouth for a cigar, and asked him the way to Shiny Wall; so he bolted his sprat headforemost, and said,—

"If I were you, young gentleman, I should go to the Allalonestone and ask the last of the Gairfowl. She is of a very ancient clan, very nearly as ancient as my own, and knows a good deal which these modern upstarts don't, as ladies of old houses are likely to do."

Tom asked his way to her, and the King of the Herrings told him very kindly, for he was a courteous old gentleman. But just as Tom had thanked him and set off he called after him, "Hi! I say, can you fly?"

"I never tried," says Tom. "Why?"

"Because if you can I should advise you to say nothing to the old lady about it. There, take a hint. Good-bye."

And away Tom went for seven days and seven nights due north-west, till he came to a great codbank, the like of which he never saw before. The great cod lay below in tens of thousands, and gobbled shell-fish all day long; and the blue sharks roved above in hundreds, and gobbled them when they came up. And there he saw the last of the Gairfowl, standing up on the Allalone-stone, all alone. And a very grand old lady she was. She had on a black velvet gown, and a white pinner and apron, and a very high bridge to her nose, and a large pair of white spectacles on it, which made her look rather odd; but it was the ancient fashion of her house.

And instead of wings she had two little feathery arms, with which she fanned herself; and she kept on crooning an old song to herself, which she learnt when she was a little baby-bird, long ago,—

"Two little birds they sat on a stone;
One swam away, and then there was one—
With a fal-lal-la-lady.

"The other swam after, and then there was none,
And so the poor stone was left all alone—
With a fal-lal-la-lady."

Tom came up to her very humbly and made his bow; and the first thing she said was,—

"Have you wings? Can you fly?"

"Oh dear no, ma'am; I should not think of such a thing," said cunning little Tom.

"Then I shall have great pleasure in talking to you, my dear. It is quite refreshing nowadays to see anything without wings. They must all have wings, forsooth, now—

every new upstart sort of bird—and fly. In the days of my ancestors no birds ever thought of having wings, and did very well without; and now they all laugh at me because I keep to the good old fashion."

And so she was running on, while Tom tried to get in a word edgeways; and at last he did, when the old lady got out of breath and began fanning herself again; and then he asked if she knew the way to Shiny Wall.

"Shiny Wall? Who should know better than I? We all came from Shiny Wall thousands of years ago, when it was decently cold, and the climate was fit for gentlefolk; but now, what with the heat, and what with these vulgar winged things who fly up and down and eat everything, so that gentlepeople's hunting is all spoilt—what was I saying? Why, we have quite gone down in the world, my dear, and have nothing left but our honour. And I am the last of my family.

"A friend of mine and I came and settled on this rock when we were young, to be out of the way of low people. Once we were a

great nation, and spread over all the Northern Isles. But men shot us so, and knocked us on the head, and took our eggs—and then, I suppose, they ate us, the nasty fellows!

"Well—but—what was I saying? At last there were none of us left except on the old Gairfowlskerry, just off the Iceland coast, up which no man could climb. Even there we had no peace; for one day, when I was quite a young girl, the land rocked, and the sea boiled, and down tumbled the old Gairfowlskerry into the sea. Some of us were dashed to pieces and some drowned; and so here I am left alone."

"But, please, which is the way to Shiny Wall?" said Tom.

"Oh, you must go, my little dear—you must go. Let me see—I am sure—that is—really my poor old brains are getting quite puzzled. Do you know, my little dear, I am afraid, if you want to know, you must ask some of these vulgar birds about, for I have quite forgotten."

And the poor old Gairfowl began to cry tears of pure oil; and Tom was quite sorry

for her, and for himself too, for he was at his wit's end whom to ask.

But by there came a flock of petrels, who are Mother Carey's own chickens; and Tom thought them much prettier than Lady Gairfowl. They flitted along like a flock of black swallows, and hopped and skipped from wave to wave, lifting up their little feet behind them so daintily, and whistling to each other so tenderly, that Tom fell in love with them at once, and called them to know the way to Shiny Wall.

"Shiny Wall? Do you want Shiny Wall? Then come with us, and we will show you. We are Mother Carey's own chickens, and she sends us out over all the seas to show the good birds the way home."

Tom was delighted, and swam off to them after he had made his bow to the Gairfowl. But she would not return his bow, but held herself bolt upright, and sang,—

"And so the poor stone was left all alone—
With a fal-lal-la-lady."

And now Tom was all agog to start for Shiny Wall; but the petrels said no. They must go first to Allfowlsness, and wait there for the great gathering of all the sea-birds, before they start for their summer breeding-places far away in the Northern Isles; and there they would be sure to find some birds which were going to Shiny Wall. But where Allfowlsness was he must promise never to tell, lest men should go there and shoot the birds, and stuff them, and put them into stupid museums, instead of leaving them to play and work in Mother Carey's water-garden, where they ought to be.

So where Allfowlsness is nobody must know, and all that is to be said about it is that Tom waited there many days.

And after a while the birds began to gather in thousands, blackening all the air—swans and geese, eiders, grebes, auks and razor-bills, gannets and petrels, with gulls beyond all naming or numbering; and they paddled and washed and splashed and combed and brushed themselves on the sand till the shore was white with feathers.

Then the petrels asked this bird and that whether they would take Tom to Shiny Wall; but none would go to Shiny Wall. So the good-natured petrels said that they would show him part of the way themselves, and after that he must shift for himself.

And as Tom and the petrels went north-eastward it began to blow right hard; but Tom and the petrels never cared, for the gale was right abaft, and away they went over the crests of the billows, as merry as so many flying-fish.

And at last they saw an ugly sight—the black side of a great ship, water-logged in the trough of the sea. Her funnel and her masts were overboard, and swayed and surged under her lee; her decks were swept as clean as a barn floor, and there was no living soul on board.

The petrels flew up to her and wailed round her, for they were very sorry indeed, and also they expected to find some salt pork; and Tom scrambled on board of her and looked round, frightened and sad.

And there, in a little cot, lashed tight

under the bulwark, lay a baby fast asleep. He went up to it, and wanted to wake it; but, behold, from under the cot out jumped a little black-and-tan terrier dog, and would not let him touch the cot.

Tom knew the dog's teeth could not hurt him, but at least it could shove him away, and did; and he and the dog fought and struggled, for he wanted to help the baby, and did not want to throw the poor dog overboard. But as they were struggling there came a tall, green sea, and walked in over the weather side of the ship, and swept them all into the waves.

"Oh the baby, the baby!" screamed Tom. But the next moment he did not scream at all, for he saw the cot settling down through the green water, with the baby, smiling in it, fast asleep; and he saw the fairies come up from below, and carry baby and cradle gently down in their soft arms; and then he knew it was all right, and that there would be another water-baby.

And the poor little dog?

Why, after he had kicked and coughed a

little, he sneezed so hard that he sneezed himself clean out of his skin, and turned into a water-dog, and jumped and danced, and followed Tom the whole way to the Other-end-of-Nowhere.

Then they went on again, till they began to see a peak standing up like a white sugar-loaf, two miles above the clouds.

And there they fell in with a whole flock of mollymocks, who were feeding on a dead whale.

"Come, come," said the petrels, "you lazy, greedy lubbers, this young gentleman is going to Mother Carey; and if you don't attend on him, you won't earn your discharge from her, you know."

"Greedy we are," says a great fat old molly, "but lazy we ain't; and as for lubbers, we're no more lubbers than you. Let's have a look at the lad."

And he flapped right into Tom's face, and stared at him in the most impudent way, and then asked him where he hailed from and what land he sighted last.

And when Tom told him he seemed

pleased, and said he was a good plucked one to have got so far.

"Come along, lads," he said to the rest, "and give this little chap a cast over the pack, for Mother Carey's sake. We've eaten blubber enough for to-day, and we'll e'en work out a bit of our time by helping the lad."

So the mollys took Tom up on their backs, and flew off with him, laughing and joking; and oh, how they did smell of train oil!

"Who are you, you jolly birds?" asked Tom.

"We are the spirits of the old Greenland skippers who hunted here full hundreds of years agone. But because we were saucy and greedy, we were all turned into mollys, to eat whales' blubber all our days."

And now they came to the edge of the pack, and beyond it they could see Shiny Wall looming, through mist, and snow, and storm. But the pack rolled horribly upon the swell, and the ice giants fought and roared, and leapt upon each other's backs, and ground each other to powder, so that Tom was afraid to venture among them, lest he should be ground to powder, too.

But the good mollys took Tom and his dog up, and flew with them safe over the pack, and set them down at the foot of Shiny Wall.

"And where is the gate?" asked Tom.

"There is no gate," said the mollys.

"What am I to do, then?"

"Dive under the floe, to be sure, if you have pluck."

"I've not come so far to turn now," said Tom; "so here goes for a header."

"A lucky voyage to you, lad," said the mollys; "we knew you were one of the right sort. So good-bye."

"Why don't you come too?" asked Tom.

But the mollys only wailed sadly, "We can't go yet, we can't go yet," and flew away over the pack.

So Tom dived under the great white gate which never was opened yet, and went on in black darkness at the bottom of the sea for seven days and seven nights. And yet he was not a bit frightened. Why should he be? He was a brave English lad, whose business is to go out and see all the world.

And at last he saw the light, and clear, clear water overhead; and up he came a thousand fathoms, among clouds of sea-moths, which fluttered round his head. The dog snapped at them till his jaws were tired; but Tom hardly minded them at all, he was so eager to get to the top of the water and see the pool where the good whales go.

And a very large pool it was, miles and miles across. All round it the ice cliffs rose in stories and galleries, in which the ice-fairies live and drive away the storms and clouds, that Mother Carey's pool may lie calm from year's end to year's end. And the sun acted policeman, and walked round outside every day, peeping over the top of the ice wall to see that all went right; and now and then he played conjuring tricks, or had an exhibition of fireworks among the ice, to amuse the ice-fairies.

And there the good whales lay, the happy, sleepy beasts, upon the still, oily sea. They were all right whales, you must know, and finners, and razorbacks, and bottlenoses, and spotted sea-unicorns with long ivory horns.

Tom swam up to the nearest whale, and asked the way to Mother Carey.

"There she sits in the middle," said the whale.

Tom looked; but he could see nothing in the middle of the pool but one peaked iceberg, and he said so.

"That's Mother Carey," said the whale, "as you will find when you get to her. There she sits making old beasts into new all the year round."

"How does she do that?"

"That's her concern, not mine," said the old whale.

"I suppose," said Tom, "she cuts up a great whale like you into a whole shoal of porpoises?"

At which the old whale laughed so violently that he coughed up all the creatures he had swallowed; and Tom went on to the iceberg, wondering.

And when he came near it, it took the form of a white marble lady, sitting on a

white marble throne. And from the foot of the throne there swam away, out and out into the sea, millions of new-born creatures, of more shapes and colours than man ever dreamed. And they were Mother Carey's children, whom she makes out of the sea-water all day long.

He expected, of course—like some grown people who ought to know better—to find her snipping, piecing, fitting, stitching, cobbling, basting, filing, planing, hammering, turning, polishing, moulding, measuring, chiselling, clipping, and so forth, as men do when they go to work to make anything.

But instead of that she sat quite still, with her chin upon her hand, looking down into the sea with two great, grand blue eyes, as blue as the sea itself. Her hair was as white as the snow, for she was very, very old—in fact, as old as anything which you are likely to come across, except the difference between right and wrong.

And when she saw Tom she looked at him very kindly.

"What do you want, my little man?

It is long since I have seen a water-baby here."

Tom told her his errand, and asked the way to the Other-end-of-Nowhere.

"You ought to know yourself, for you have been there already."

"Have I, ma'am? I'm sure I forget all about it."

"Then look at me."

And as Tom looked into her great blue eyes he recollected the way perfectly.

"Thank you, ma'am," said Tom. "Then I won't trouble your ladyship any more; I hear you are very busy."

"I am never more busy than I am now," she said, without stirring a finger.

"I heard, ma'am, that you were always making new beasts out of old."

"So people fancy. But I am not going to trouble myself to make things, my little dear. I sit here and make them make themselves."

"You are a clever fairy, indeed," thought Tom; and he was quite right.

"And now, my pretty little man," said

Mother Carey, "you are sure you know the way to the Other-end-of-Nowhere?"

Tom thought, and, behold, he had forgotten it utterly.

"That is because you took your eyes off me."

Tom looked at her again, and recollected; and then looked away, and forgot in an instant.

"But what am I to do, ma'am? for I can't keep looking at you when I am somewhere else."

"You must do without me, and look at the dog instead; for he knows the way well enough, and will not forget it. Besides, you may meet some very queer-tempered people there, who will not let you pass without this passport of mine, which you must hang round your neck and take care of; and, of course, as the dog will always go behind you, you must go the whole way backward."

"Backward!" cried Tom. "Then I shall not be able to see my way."

"On the contrary, if you look forward you will not see a step before you, and be

certain to go wrong; but if you look behind you, and especially keep your eye on the dog, then you will know what is coming next, as plainly as if you saw it in a looking-glass."

Tom was very much astonished; but he obeyed her, for he had learnt always to believe what the fairies told him

CHAPTER VIII.

NOW, as soon as Tom had left Peacepool he came to the white lap of the great sea-mother, ten thousand fathoms deep. And there Tom was very near being kneaded up and turned into a fossil water-baby. For, as he walked along on the soft white ocean floor, he was aware of a hissing, and a roaring, and a thumping, and a pumping, as of all the steam-engines in the world at once. And, when he came near, the water grew boiling hot—not that this hurt him in the least—and every moment he stumbled over dead shells, and fish, and sharks, and seals, and whales, which had been killed by the hot water.

And at last he came to the great sea-serpent himself, lying dead at the bottom; and as he was too thick to scramble over, Tom had to

walk round him three-quarters of a mile and more; and when he had got round he came to the place called Stop. And there he stopped, and just in time.

For he was on the edge of a vast hole in the bottom of the sea, up which was rushing and roaring clear steam enough to work all the engines in the world at once—so clear, indeed, that it was quite light at moments, and Tom could see down below into the pit for nobody knows how far.

But as soon as he bent his head over the edge he got such a rap on the nose from a pebble that he jumped back again; for the steam, as it rushed up, rasped away the sides of the hole, and hurled it up into the sea in a shower of mud and gravel and ashes; and before Tom had stood there five minutes he was buried in silt up to his ankles, and began to be afraid that he should be buried alive.

And perhaps he would have been, but that while he was thinking, the whole piece of ground on which he stood was torn off and blown upwards; and away flew Tom a mile

up through the sea, wondering what was coming next.

At last he stopped—thump! and found himself tight in the legs of the most wonderful bogy which he had ever seen.

It had I don't know how many wings, as big as the sails of a windmill. And for every wing above it had a leg below, with a claw like a comb at the tip, and a nostril at the root; and in the middle it had no stomach and one eye; and as for its mouth, that was all on one side.

"What do you want here," it cried quite peevishly, "getting in my way?" And it tried to drop Tom; but he held on tight to its claws, thinking himself safer where he was.

So Tom told it who he was, and what his errand was. And the thing winked its one eye, and sneered,—

"I am too old to be taken in in that way. You are come after gold—I know you are."

"Gold! What is gold?" And really Tom did not know; but the old bogy would not believe him.

But after a while Tom began to under-

stand a little. For, as the vapours came up out of the hole, the bogy smelt them with its nostrils, and combed them and sorted them with its combs; and then, when they steamed up through them against its wings, they were changed into showers and streams of metal, and sank into the soft mud, into veins and cracks, and hardened there. Whereby it comes to pass that the rocks are full of metal.

But, all of a sudden, somebody shut off the steam below, and the hole was left empty in an instant; and then down rushed the water into the hole, in such a whirlpool that the bogy spun round and round as fast as a teetotum. But that was all in its day's work, so all it did was to say to Tom,—

"Now is your time, youngster, to get down, if you are in earnest, which I don't believe."

"You'll soon see," said Tom; and away he went down the rushing cataract like a salmon.

And when he got to the bottom he swam till he was washed on shore safe upon the Other-end-of-Nowhere.

And at last, after innumerable adventures, each more wonderful than the last, he saw before him a huge building. Tom walked toward it, wondering what it was, and having a strange fancy that he might find Mr. Grimes inside it, till he saw running toward him, and shouting "Stop!" three or four people, who, when they came nearer, were nothing else than policemen's truncheons, running along without legs or arms.

Tom was not astonished. He was long past that. Neither was he frightened; for he had been doing no harm.

So he stopped; and when the foremost truncheon came up and asked his business, he showed Mother Carey's pass, and the truncheon looked at it in the oddest fashion, for it had one eye in the middle of its upper end, so that when it looked at anything, being quite stiff, it had to slope itself, and poke itself, till it was a wonder that it did not tumble over.

"All right—pass on," said it at last. And then it added, "I had better go

with you, young man." And Tom had no objection, for such company was both respectable and safe; so the truncheon coiled its thong neatly round its handle, to prevent tripping itself up—for the thong had got loose in running—and marched on by Tom's side.

"Why have you no policeman to carry you?" asked Tom, after a while.

"Because we are not like those clumsy-made truncheons in the land-world, which cannot go without having a whole man to carry them about. We do our own work for ourselves, and do it very well, though I say it who should not."

"Then why have you a thong to your handle?" asked Tom.

"To hang ourselves up by, of course, when we are off duty."

Tom had got his answer, and had no more to say till they came up to the great iron door of the prison. And there the truncheon knocked twice, with its own head.

A wicket in the door opened, and out looked a tremendous old brass blunderbuss,

who was the porter, charged up to the muzzle with slugs; and Tom started back a little at the sight of him.

"What case is this?" he asked in a deep voice, out of his broad bell mouth.

"If you please, sir, it is no case; only a young gentleman from her ladyship, who wants to see Grimes, the master-sweep."

"Grimes?" said the blunderbuss. And he pulled in his muzzle, perhaps to look over his prison-lists.

"Grimes is up chimney No. 345," he said from inside. "So the young gentleman had better go on to the roof."

Tom looked up at the enormous wall, which seemed at least ninety miles high, and wondered how he should ever get up; but when he hinted that to the truncheon, it settled the matter in a moment. For it whisked round, and gave him such a shove behind as sent him up to the roof in no time, with his little dog under his arm.

And there he walked along the leads, till he met another truncheon, and told it his errand.

"Very good," it said. "Come along; but it will be of no use. He is the most unremorseful, hard-hearted, foul-mouthed fellow I have in charge, and thinks about nothing but beer and pipes, which are not allowed here, of course."

So they walked along over the leads, and very sooty they were, and Tom thought the chimneys must want sweeping very much. But he was surprised to see that the soot did not stick to his feet or dirty them in the least. Neither did the live coals, which were lying about in plenty, burn him.

And at last they came to chimney No. 345. Out of the top of it, his head and shoulders just showing, stuck poor Mr. Grimes, so sooty and bleared and ugly that Tom could hardly bear to look at him. And in his mouth was a pipe; but it was not alight, though he was pulling at it with all his might.

"Attention, Mr. Grimes," said the truncheon; "here is a gentleman come to see you."

But Mr. Grimes only said bad words,

and kept grumbling, "My pipe won't draw, my pipe won't draw."

"Keep a civil tongue, and attend!" said the truncheon; and it popped up just like Punch, hitting Grimes such a crack over the head with itself that his brains rattled inside like a dried walnut in its shell. Now he was forced to attend.

"Hey!" he said, "why, it's Tom.—I suppose you have come here to laugh at me, you spiteful little atomy?"

Tom assured him he had not, but only wanted to help him.

"I don't want anything except beer, and that I can't get; and a light to this bothering pipe, and that I can't get either."

"I'll get you one," said Tom, and he took up a live coal (there were plenty lying about) and put it to Grimes's pipe, but it went out instantly.

"It's no use," said the truncheon, leaning itself up against the chimney and looking on. "I tell you it is no use. His heart is so cold that it freezes everything that comes near him. You will see that presently."

"Oh, of course, it's my fault. Everything's always my fault," said Grimes. "Now, don't go to hit me again" (for the truncheon started upright, and looked very wicked); "you know, if my arms were only free, you daren't hit me then."

The truncheon leant back against the chimney, and took no notice of the personal insult, like a well-trained policeman as it was.

"But can't I help you in any other way? Can't I help you to get out of this chimney?" said Tom.

"No," interposed the truncheon; "he has come to the place where everybody must help themselves; and he will find it out, I hope, before he has done with me."

"Oh yes," said Grimes, "of course it's me. Did I ask to be brought here into the prison? Did I ask to be set to sweep your foul chimneys? Did I ask to have lighted straw put under me to make me go up? Did I ask to stick fast in the very first chimney of all, because it was so shamefully clogged up with soot? Did I ask to stay

here—I don't know how long—a hundred years I do believe, and never get my pipe, nor my beer, nor nothing fit for a beast, let alone a man?"

"No," answered a solemn voice behind. "No more did Tom, when you behaved to him in the very same way."

It was Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid. And, when the truncheon saw her, it started bolt upright—attention!—and made such a low bow that if it had not been full of the spirit of justice, it must have tumbled on its end, and probably hurt its one eye. And Tom made his bow too.

"O ma'am," he said, "don't think about me; that's all past and gone, and good times and bad times and all times pass over. But may not I help poor Mr. Grimes? Mayn't I try to get some of these bricks away, that he may move his arms?"

"You may try, of course," she said.

So Tom pulled and tugged at the bricks but he could not move one. And then he tried to wipe Mr. Grimes's face; but the soot would not come off.

"Oh dear!" he said; "I have come all this way, through all these terrible places, to help you, and now I am of no use at all."

"You had best leave me alone," said Grimes; "you are a good-natured, forgiving little chap, and that's truth; but you'd best be off. The hail's coming on soon, and it will beat the eyes out of your little head."

"What hail?"

"Why, hail that falls every evening here; and, till it comes close to me, it's like so much warm rain; but then it turns to hail over my head, and knocks me about like small shot."

"That hail will never come any more," said the strange lady. "I have told you before what it was. It was your mother's tears, those which she shed when she prayed for you by her bedside; but your cold heart froze it into hail. But she is gone to heaven now, and will weep no more for her graceless son."

Then Grimes was silent awhile; and then he looked very sad.

"So my old mother's gone, and I never

there to speak to her! Ah! a good woman she was, and might have been a happy one, in her little school there in Vendale, if it hadn't been for me and my bad ways."

"Did she keep the school in Vendale?" asked Tom. And then he told Grimes all the story of his going to her house, and how she could not abide the sight of a chimney-sweep, and then how kind she was, and how he turned into a water-baby.

"Ah!" said Grimes, "good reason she had to hate the sight of a chimney-sweep. I ran away from her and took up with the sweeps, and never let her know where I was, nor sent her a penny to help her; and now it's too late—too late!" said Mr. Grimes.

And he began crying and blubbering like a great baby, till his pipe dropped out of his mouth and broke all to bits.

"Oh dear, if I was but a little chap in Vendale again, how different I would go on! But it's too late now. It's all my own fault; but it's too late." And he cried so bitterly that Tom began crying too.

"Never too late," said the fairy, in such a

strange, soft, new voice that Tom looked up at her; and she was so beautiful for the moment that Tom half fancied she was her sister.

No more was it too late. For, as poor Grimes cried and blubbered on, his own tears did what his mother's could not do, and Tom's could not do, and nobody's on earth could do for him; for they washed the soot off his face and off his clothes, and then they washed the mortar away from between the bricks, and the chimney crumbled down, and Grimes began to get out of it.

Up jumped the truncheon, and was going to hit him on the crown a tremendous thump, and drive him down again like a cork into a bottle. But the strange lady put it aside.

"Will you obey me if I give you a chance?"

"As you please, ma'am. You're stronger than me—that I know too well; and wiser than me, I know too well also. And as for being my own master, I've fared ill enough

with that as yet. So, whatever your ladyship pleases to order me I will do; for I'm beat, and that's the truth."

"Be it so then; you may come out. But remember, disobey me again, and into a worse place still you go."

"I beg pardon, ma'am, but I never disobeyed you that I know of. I never had the honour of setting eyes upon you till I came to these ugly quarters."

"Never saw me? Who said to you, 'Those that will be foul, foul they will be'?"

Grimes looked up, and Tom looked up too, for the voice was that of the Irishwoman who met them the day that they went out together to Harthover. "I gave you your warning then; but you gave it yourself a thousand times before and since. Every bad word that you said, every cruel and mean thing that you did, you were disobeying me, whether you knew it or not."

"If I'd only known, ma'am——"

"You knew well enough that you were disobeying something, though you did not know it was me. But come out and take

your chance. Perhaps it may be your last."

So Grimes stepped out of the chimney; and really, if it had not been for the scars on his face, he looked as clean and respectable as a master-sweep need look.

"Take him away," said she to the truncheon.

"And what is he to do, ma'am?"

"Get him to sweep out the crater of Etna. He will find some very steady men working out their time there, who will teach him his business; but mind, if that crater gets choked again, and there is an earthquake in consequence, bring them all to me."

So the truncheon marched off Mr. Grimes, looking as meek as a drowned worm.

And for aught I know, or do not know, he is sweeping the crater of Etna to this very day.

"And now," said the fairy to Tom, "your work here is done. You may as well go back again."

"I should be glad enough to go," said Tom, "but how am I to get up that great

hole again, now the steam has stopped blowing?"

"I will take you up the backstairs; but I must bandage your eyes first, for I never allow anybody to see those backstairs of mine."

"I am sure I shall not tell anybody about them, ma'am, if you bid me not."

"Aha! So you think, my little man. But you would soon forget your promise if you got back into the land-world. I never put things into little folk's heads which are but too likely to come there of themselves. So come; now I must bandage your eyes." So she tied the bandage on his eyes with one hand, and with the other she took it off.

"Now," she said, "you are safe up the stairs." Tom opened his eyes very wide, and his mouth too; for he had not, as he thought, moved a single step. But, when he looked round him, there could be no doubt that he was safe up the back-stairs, whatsoever they may be, which no man is going to tell you, for the plain reason that no man knows.

The first thing which Tom saw was the black cedars, high and sharp against the rosy dawn; and the island home of the water-babies reflected double in the still, broad, silver sea. The wind sang softly in the cedars, and the water sang among the caves; the sea-birds sang as they streamed out into the ocean, and the land-birds as they built among the boughs, and the air was full of song. But among all the songs one came across the water more sweet and clear than all, for it was the song of a young girl's voice.

And what was the song which she sang? Ah, my little man, I am too old to sing that song, and you too young to understand it. But have patience, and keep your eye single, and your hands clean, and you will learn some day to sing it yourself, without needing any man to teach you.

And as Tom neared the island there sat upon a rock the most graceful creature that ever was seen, looking down, with her chin upon her hand, and paddling with her feet in the water. And when they came to her she looked up, and behold it was Ellie.

"O Miss Ellie," said he, "how you are grown!"

"O Tom," said she, "how you are grown too!"

And no wonder; they were both quite grown up—he into a tall man, and she into a beautiful woman.

"Perhaps I may be grown," she said. "I have had time enough; for I have been sitting here waiting for you many a hundred years, till I thought you were never coming."

"Many a hundred years!" thought Tom; but he had seen so much in his travels that he had quite given up being astonished; and, indeed, he could think of nothing but Ellie. So he stood and looked at Ellie, and Ellie looked at him; and they liked the employment so much that they stood and looked for seven years more, and neither spoke nor stirred.

At last they heard the fairy say, "Attention, children! Are you never going to look at me again?"

"We have been looking at you all this while," they said. And so they thought they had been.

"Then look at me once more," said she.

They looked; and both of them cried out at once, "Oh, who are you, after all?"

"You are our dear Mrs. Doasyouwouldbedoneby."

"No, you are good Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid; but you are grown quite beautiful now!"

"To you," said the fairy. "But look again."

"You are Mother Carey," said Tom, in a very low, solemn voice; for he had found out something which made him very happy, and yet frightened him more than all that he had ever seen.

"But you are grown quite young again."

"To you," said the fairy. "Look again."

"You are the Irishwoman who met me the day I went to Harthover!"

And when they looked she was neither of them, and yet all of them at once.

"My name is written in my eyes, if you have eyes to see it there," she said.

And they looked into her great, deep, soft eyes; and they changed again and again into every hue, as the light changes in a diamond.

"Now read my name," said she at last.

And her eyes flashed, for one moment, clear, white, blazing light; but the children could not read her name, for they were dazzled, and hid their faces in their hands.

"Not yet, young things, not yet," said she, smiling; and then she turned to Ellie.

"You may take him home with you now on Sundays, Ellie. He has won his spurs in the great battle, and become fit to go with you and be a man, because he has done the thing he did not like."

So Tom went home with Ellie on Sundays, and sometimes on week-days too; and he is now a great man of science, and can plan railroads, and steam-engines, and electric telegraphs, and rifled guns, and so forth; and he knows everything about everything, except why a hen's egg don't turn into a

crocodile, and two or three other little things which no one will know till the coming of the Cocqcigrues. And all this from what he learnt when he was a water-baby, underneath the sea.

"And of course Tom married Ellie?"

My dear child, what a silly notion! Don't you know that no one ever marries in a fairy tale under the rank of a prince or a princess?

"And Tom's dog?"

Oh, you may see him any clear night in July; for the old dog-star was so worn out by the last three hot summers that there have been no dog-days since; so that they had to take him down and put Tom's dog up in his place. Therefore, as new brooms sweep clean, we may hope for some warm weather this year. And that is the end of my story.

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